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BATTLE:

The Life Story of Winston S. Churchill

PRIME MINISTER

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The Life Story of Winston S. Churchill

PRIME MINISTER

Study of a Genius

by

HUGH MARTIN

Dulce periculum est—HORACE

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

IT HAPPENS THAT my work as a journalist has brought me at various times, since Mr. Churchill first took ministerial office, into close touch with what the world has come to speak of as "Winston's shows".

I was at the Sidney-street "siege" in 1911; on the fringe of the Antwerp enterprise in 1914; a spectator of the Dardanelles tragedy in 1915; in personal contact with the Irish Treaty settlement in 1921, and the Irish civil war in 1922; at Constantinople during the final stage of the Chanak episode towards the close of the following year; and I watched from the Press Gallery of the House of Commons the opening of all five Churchill Budgets, in 1925 to 1929.

Let this be my excuse for attempting to retell so brave and fateful a tale.

A last word from one who is prouder than ever to-day to call himself an Englishman.

If the Irish Treaty had not been made it is hard to believe that America could be helping us now. And in all humility I feel that at least I did something to make that Treaty possible by telling the truth at the time.

H. M.

London, W.C. 1

September, 27, 1940.

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I

PRELUDE

I. NEW WORLD: OLD WORLD

WHEN MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL, on the night of December 13, 1931, stepped off the kerb on Fifth Avenue, New York, in front of Mario Constasino's taxicab, and proceeded to make brilliant newspaper copy out of the result, he was acting in character. Since he was a lad he had been getting knocked down in the world's traffic centres—sometimes an innocent victim of circumstance, sometimes as a blameworthy jay-walker—and turning the accident into an achievement.

That was the Battle of Life: the very essence of it, the fun of it. You might be knocked down, but you couldn't be knocked out. You never took the count. There was a dynamic energy within you that transformed Fate's nastiest knocks into the motive force behind a fresh advance against the enemy that was for ever trying to get you down.

In the case of Mario Constasino's speeding taxicab the knock worked out, according to the calculations of a mathematical friend consulted in hospital, at 6,000 foot-pounds, equivalent to a fall of thirty feet by a man of Churchill's weight—just the distance he had fallen at Bournemouth, as this book tells later—and he ought really (in his own words) "to have been broken like an eggshell or smashed like a gooseberry". But Destiny had evidently not written the last chapter. He believes in Destiny, in the Napoleonic sense of the word; as an inspiration, not as "an illusion by which men dignify their disasters". Most men sound silly when they begin talking about Destiny. To do so

without sounding silly is one test of a man's bigness, either in achievement or in potentiality.

The immediate effect of the taxicab's impact upon Churchill was to create a characteristic mental condition—intense excitement associated with rigid control of the thought and nerve centres. The appearance of the same condition at times of crisis will be noted at intervals throughout this story. It is peculiarly a soldier's quality, and is of special value to the newspaper reporter, because it implies a high degree of mental receptivity at moments when other men's memories are apt to register a foggy negative for future printing. "Keep cool, men; this will make good copy for my paper," said young Churchill, the War Correspondent, when bullets were spattering the armoured train at Chieveley Junction. Churchill is the newspaper-man-cum-soldier in politics.

It is a combination bound to produce surprising and unconventional results, and one that might be expected to make a special appeal to the American mind. In choosing New York for his encounter with a taxicab Mr. Churchill showed judgment. It was a far better place than London or Paris to give this concentrated illustration of his qualities of courage, coolness, self-control. At no other spot in the world would there have been such a spontaneous appreciation of the many-sided implications of the incident. His genius for publicity—a genius clearly in league with Destiny—was never better proved.

In all the small accompanying incidents he touched the right chord. His instant exoneration of Mario Constatino from all blame; his sympathy with the distress of the poor fellow, expressed by introductions to the family and the presentation of a copy of his latest book; his insistence upon giving thirty-five out of the forty-five lectures which he had come over to the States to deliver: all these were immensely appreciated by the great heart of the nation.

Nor must it be imagined that in any of this there was calculation. The delightful thing about Winston Churchill

is that he is uncalculated and incalculable. He reacts to stimuli impulsively, forcefully and without ulterior motive. That is to say, he stays young. Watch his face during a hot debate in the House of Commons, and you will be convinced. After all these years of public life he colours at the touch of a taunt. There is no concealment. The effect comes as inevitably as the reflex action of a knee-jerk.

That is one of the reasons why he is declared by his critics to have jay-walked through life. Or, as a sincere admirer, the late Lord Oxford, once put it, why they think him "a genius without judgment". It is probably true that the very speed and certainty of his reflexes account for a good deal at least of his unpopularity in high political quarters, which he has always found it hard to understand. "I have never joined in an intrigue," he told Lord Fisher. "Everything I have got I have fought for. And yet I have been more hated than anybody!" His friend, F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead), wrote: "He is almost the only man I have ever known who simply could not speak or acquiesce in an untruth in a matter great or small, however inconvenient it might be."

The adventure on Fifth Avenue is worth recalling as the keynote of his career for one other reason. It was encountered on the road to the renewal of a particularly fruitful Anglo-American friendship. Churchill had left the Waldorf Astoria Hotel with the intention of calling upon Mr. Bernard M. Baruch, who was head of the American War Industries Board at the time when he himself was British Minister of Munitions. That was during the last lap of the World War One, and Churchill, at least, was convinced that the issue hung upon American action. He and Baruch had struck up a warm friendship long before they met in London. Now they were to meet again and talk over old times.

Churchill thought he knew the house by sight, but he had forgotten the number—1055—in Fifth Avenue. It was while he was thinking of Bernard Baruch, and trying to

identify the house, that there came a crash like the explosion of a shell in his old regimental headquarters at "Plugstreet"—"one moment of a world aglare".

"These hazards," he had written when quite a young man, "swoop on me out of a cloudless sky, and that I have hitherto come unscathed through them, while it fills my heart with thankfulness to God for His mercies, makes me wonder why I must be so often thrust to the brink and then withdrawn. . . ."

.

Lord D'Abernon, the British diplomat, asks in his book *An Ambassador of Peace*: "Are meteoric apparitions like Winston the normal result of Anglo-American unions?" "Such a prospect," he answers, "might seem portentous. No anxiety, however, need be felt. Winston was not the child of ordinary parents."

His father, Lord Randolph Spencer-Churchill, was the third son of the seventh Duke of Marlborough; his mother, Jeanette ("Jenny") Jerome, daughter of Leonard Jerome, New York journalist, dashing man-of-business, and turf enthusiast. Both parents were of quite exceptional brilliance, using the word in its most literal sense as applied to personalities. That is to say, they were not merely able or intellectual, but had qualities which dazzled.

Randolph Churchill was possessed of a wit, a daring, and an originality capable of startling friends and enemies alike in days when British politics were particularly rich in romantic or heroic figures. His flamboyant oratory and insolence of attack made him the greatest platform draw of his day, whilst his particular brand of Conservatism left the whole world guessing what he would say or do next. Of this "Tory Democracy" his son has written:

"Tory Democracy was necessarily a compromise (perilously near a paradox in the eye of the partisan) between widely different forces and ideas; ancient permanent institutions becoming instruments of far-reaching social

reforms: order conjoined with liberty; stability and yet progress; the Tory Party and daring legislation! Yet narrow as was the path along which he moved, multitudes began to follow. Illogical and unsymmetrical as the idea might seem—the idea not even novel—it grew vital and true at his touch. At a time when Liberal formulas and Tory inertia seemed alike shallow and comfortless, he warmed the heart of England and strangely stirred the imagination of her people.”¹

His person, like his oratory, was inclined to be flamboyant. As a boy he is remembered to have shocked Eton by appearing in a waistcoat of brilliant violet hue—“loud like his laugh”. His laugh was indeed famous all through life. The exuberance of his spirits was infectious. Like his son, it was impossible to ignore him in any company. The blood-pressure was terrific. When it came to courting, the lady who was to be his wife wrote that he was “of a temper that gallops till it falls”.

At Eton he did reasonably well, but at Oxford was inclined to play the “English gentleman” and be fonder of hunting than of books. His education when he was presented with the family seat in Parliament was at least as good as that of most young men of his class, and what he lacked in education he made up for in alert intelligence. The legend that when Chancellor of the Exchequer he inquired the meaning of “those damned dots” may be taken to indicate that he retained his sense of undergraduate humour after leaving college.

On his father’s side Winston Churchill is descended from, and named after, the Sir Winston Churchill, who was father of John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough, possibly the greatest of English soldiers. Sir Winston was a cavalier of Charles II’s reign, “brilliant but erratic”, according to Gardiner; “making himself ridiculous by publishing a dull and affected folio”, according to Macaulay. The folio, setting out to prove the divine right of

¹ W. S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, Macmillan, 1907.

kings, was entitled: "Divi Britannici: being a remark upon the lives of all the Kings of this Isle from the year of the world 2855 unto the year of Grace 1660".

Five-and-twenty years before the publication of this portentous and tendencious treatise his son, the future duke, was born down in Devon. Joining a regiment of Guards as ensign, he was already distinguishing himself on foreign service, at Tangier, by the time he was seventeen years of age, and before he was thirty had been made a colonel for his services in the Dutch wars to Louis XIV, the "Grand Monarque". James II presented him with a barony, and employed him to suppress Monmouth's rebellion; William of Orange, to whom he seceded, went one better and made him an earl.

In the War of the Spanish Succession he won the famous victories of Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenard and Malplaquet. When Queen Anne ascended the throne she passed for a time completely under his influence and that of his wife, formerly Miss Sarah Jennings. She loaded him with honours, money and land—Blenheim Palace (Winston Churchill's birthplace), the estate of Woodstock (Lord Randolph's constituency), and a dukedom. Then, three years before her death, the Duke fell from power on suspicion of enriching himself at the expense of the State. George I restored him to favour; but too late, for he spent the last six years of his life an imbecile. It has been said of the Duke that he was "one of England's greatest generals, but also one of her meanest men".

Of his superb military gifts, or of his personal bravery, there can be no two opinions. He was a soldier through and through, fit hero for a descendant of whom the same might be said. "He volunteered his services on every occasion of difficulty and danger," wrote his biographer, Coxe, Archdeacon of Wilts, in 1818. "Aversc, by character as well as from principle, from defensive warfare, he was always the assailant, and invariably pursued one great object, regardless of minor considerations. He conquered, not by chance,

or the unskilfulness of antagonists, but by superior intelligence and activity; by the profoundness of his combinations, the unexpected celerity of his movements, and the promptitude and decision of his attacks."¹

Lord Randolph Churchill, the brilliant descendant of this brilliant and unscrupulous soldier, met the future Winston Churchill's mother, Miss Jenny Jerome, at a ball on board the cruiser *Ariadne* anchored off Cowes, in August, 1873. With her mother and her sister, Clare, she was on a long visit to Europe; indeed she knew Europe almost as well as her own country, for she had been born in Italy when her father was U.S.A. consul at Trieste, had hardly spoken any language but Italian until she was three years old, and had been educated in the Paris of Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie—and James Gordon Bennett.

Leonard Jerome, her father, was a man of parts. After graduating at Princeton he had made, and lost, a fortune or two—as the adventurous habit of such Americans was in those spacious days—before settling down to journalism as owner and co-editor, with Henry Raymond, of the *New York Times*. What a "hell of a feller" he was may be judged from the fact that, when the views of the *New York Times* became excessively unpopular during the American Civil War, he made no bones about arming his staff and turning the offices into a fortress defended by artillery.

Leonard Jerome was also a great racing man. He was the principal founder of the first two great race-courses established in the States—Jerome Park and the course belonging to the Coney Island Jockey Club. He has been called "the father of the American Turf". One of the future Lady Randolph Churchill's brightest memories of childhood was of her drives to and from Jerome Park in her father's coach and four.

What mental picture should we draw, then, of this

¹ Archdeacon Coxe, *Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough*, Longmans, 1818.

Miss Jenny Jerome, daughter of so notable a product of a younger civilisation, who won the heart and hand of one of the most notable offshoots of an old English family? There is no more glowing and unforgettable sketch than Viscount D'Abernon's.

"I have," he wrote, "the clearest recollection of seeing her for the first time. It was at the Viceregal Lodge at Dublin. She stood on one side, to the left of the entrance. The Viceroy (the Duke of Marlborough) was on a dais at the further end of the room surrounded by a brilliant staff, but eyes were not turned on him or his consort, but on a dark, lithe figure, standing somewhat apart and appearing to be of another texture to those around her, ardent, translucent, intent.

"A diamond star in her hair, her favourite ornament—its lustre dimmed by the flashing glory of her eyes. More of the panther than of the woman in her look, but with a cultivated intelligence unknown to the jungle. . . . Her desire to please, her delight in life, and the genuine wish that all should share her joyous faith in it, made her the centre of a devoted circle."¹

Randolph Churchill and Jenny Jerome first met, as already stated, at a ball. He was twenty-four; she was nineteen. The brilliant occasion belonged in its whole atmosphere to another age: the Czarewitch and Czarevna were being fêted.

It was a case of head over heels in love at first sight. Two days later he proposed and she accepted. Both families raised strong objection, but it was plain from the first that opposition was completely wasted. The Duke, Lord Randolph's father, doing his utmost to break off the match, wrote harshly at first about marrying in haste and repenting at leisure, and about "the uncontrolled state of your feelings which completely paralyses your judgment".

¹ Edgar Vincent, Viscount D'Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1920.

The young lady was swept off to Paris, and offered all the distractions of the town. Her lover followed. Judging the case hopeless, the Duke relented on condition that his son would at least get elected to Parliament for the family pocket borough of Woodstock before rashly wedding this American girl.

This he graciously consented to do, and they were married at the British Embassy in Paris on April 15, 1874. A son whom they named Winston Leonard was born to them at the end of November. Throughout life, so envious rivals said, he was always "a young man in a hurry".

II. YOUNG KNEE-WORTHY

Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill was not what sentimentalists would call a lovable child. Although his health was not strong, he was not in the least wistful or coaxing; indeed it is questionable whether anybody but his nurse was ever tempted to describe him as a nice little boy. Niceness is not usually associated with such intense vitality.

He was fiercely vital from the cradle, with a life-thrust that gave neither himself nor those around him much peace. His greed of life approached gluttony.

Moreover, he was plain. Red hair, freckles, wide-open pale-blue eyes, and a snub nose gave him the air of what we should call now-a-days rather a jolly kid; but the effect as a whole wanted toning down. And instead of being toned down it was constantly being emphasised by the child's irrepressible assertiveness. The small body was clumsy, and, as it were, over-engined, so that romping was apt to become rioting. Energy and courage drove out most other qualities.

His parents soon acquired a habit of apologising for this obstreperous youngster, "not much yet, but a good 'un", as Lord Randolph explained to Bram Stoker. Later on, right up to young manhood, he was perpetually criticised by his father in a way that may have had a permanent

effect upon his character in maturity. Not that his father's disappointment—at times reaching the point of exasperation—is not easily understood, for on the surface he was a failure. And it was really only the surface that either of his parents knew.

Lord Randolph lived at the gallop among public affairs: his American wife flashed hither and thither in Society—not a butterfly, but a comet influencing the orbits even of the greater planets. Vastly popular among all classes of society, she may almost be said to have created the Primrose League, and her electoral activities made the music halls sing of her:

Bless my soul, that Yankee lady,
Whether day was bright or shady,
Dashed about that district like an oriflamme of war.
When the voters saw her bonnet
With the bright pink roses on it
They followed as the soldiers did the helmet of Navaire.

The only living being who in his early years really knew the naughty, cheeky, violent little boy Winston was Mrs. Everest, his nurse. They loved one another with idyllic intensity and simplicity, and the photograph of "Nurse" has an honoured place to-day at Chartwell, as it had in Mr. Churchill's first bachelor flat in Mayfair. One of the bravest things he did in his life was to kiss Mrs. Everest before the boys when she came to see him at Harrow.

With his nurse, the four-year-old Winston crossed to Ireland in 1878 to live for a year or two in Phoenix Park, his grandfather, the Duke of Marlborough, having been appointed Lord Lieutenant and taken Lord Randolph Churchill as his secretary. They lived at The Little Lodge, quite near the Viceregal Lodge. Mrs. Everest told the child about some terrible people called Fenians, who were Papishers, and a man called Mr. Burke gave him a drum.

The story of young Churchill's schooldays is not cheerful. He has said of them himself that they were the only barren and unhappy period of his life. It was not, as with a good many, that he was unhappy in the perpetual company of other boys, that he was "sensitive", or that he was bullied, but that he loathed book-learning and never got on well with schoolmasters. He would probably have enjoyed manual education up to a point, and if he has enjoyed a thing he has always been able to master it. Better still, he would have loved to work at some trade with his father, whom, at a distance, he adored.

That being out of the question, he ought to have been allowed to run wild. The education he actually got was sheer waste of time and money, and it is a standing testimony to the virility of his mental make-up that it did not ruin him. But original genius will never fit into an educational system that is bound to be designed for the average.

Apart from such considerations, his academic start was particularly unlucky. His first private school was expensive, fashionable, and, by all accounts, very ill managed. Winston was sent there when he was seven and by the time he was nine his health had broken down. The headmaster was cruel; birchings were frequent and deliberate, and care was taken that the screams of the birched reached the ears of the rest of the school.

Winston hated the headmaster. He brooded and plotted revenge. He kicked the headmaster's hat to pieces and was beaten.

The other masters found him both precocious and stupid, impudent and sulky. His breakdown was timely, for it forced those at home to notice what was happening. The boy was removed and sent to a school at the other end of the scale—kept by two ladies in bracing Brighton.

No doubt the ladies were proud to be entrusted with the preparatory education of a son of the great Lord Randolph Churchill, now fairly aflame in the political heavens,

but they soon found the child was a handful. It is of this period that one is most reminded when reading Mr. H. G. Wells' astute comment on the grown-up Winston: "There are times when the evil spirit comes upon him and when I think of him only as a very intractable, a very mischievous, dangerous little boy, a knee-worthy little boy. Only by thinking of him in that way can I go on liking him."¹ One doubts if Mr. Wells would have gone on liking him for very long at Brighton.

He was constantly in hot water. Snub nose and red hair were for ever in the van against authority. The birch had failed to teach him the rudiments of discipline; now it was the turn of feminine gentleness to show itself almost equally powerless. There is not likely to be much chivalry about a boy of nine.

One of his governesses was Miss Eva Moore, the actress, who tried to teach him dancing. She remembered him, after a lapse of years, as "a small, red-headed pupil, the naughtiest boy in the class; I used to think him the naughtiest small boy in the world!"

He was cheeky in a specially annoying way, because it was rather smart. For instance, when he was told to call out in class the number of good-conduct marks he had lost, or to say "No" if he had not lost any, he persisted in calling out "Nein"; and his pale blue eyes opened wide in innocent astonishment when the class-mistress told him not to talk nonsense, he couldn't have lost nine. "But I was only talking German," he replied.

Perhaps the best cameo portrait is supplied by a sentence in a letter by Lady Leslie to Rider Haggard, the novelist, telling how keen the boy was on *King Solomon's Mines*, and asking if he would see him. "A very interesting being," wrote Lady Leslie, "*though temporarily uppish.*"

"Uppish" hits off well the impression made on a good many people by this ten-year-old volcano of animal spirits. There are birthday-books in existence with the signature

¹ H. G. Wells, *A Year of Problasyns*, T. Fisher Unwin, 1924.

"Winston Spencer-Churchill" at the date November 30, followed by these lines from "Paradise Lost":

"To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell;
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven."

Games did not attract him, but one of the popular hobbies of the moment, toy theatricals, did. He flung himself with enthusiasm into the construction of a toy theatre, and the production of a play, *Aladdin*. There was a shop in Old Street, City, which specialised in catering for the hobby, that became possessed of a great deal of his pocket money during the holidays.

The only trouble about little Winston's toy theatre seems to have been that its proprietor's plans were too big both for his pocket and his skill as a producer. His imagination and ambition ran away with him. It is not, therefore, recorded that the stupendous pantomime, *Aladdin*, ever got beyond rehearsals.

At eight years old, however, the boy displayed talent on the full-sized stage—he distinguished himself in a school performance of Colman's *Heir at Law*—for he had an exceptional memory, was not in the least shy, and had a strong sense of the dramatic. A slight impediment in his speech that would have made most children shrink from any sort of public performance did not worry him. On the contrary he was glad of any opportunity to try and conquer it, and recited verses with gusto whenever he was given the chance. Even thus early, learning by rote was never the slightest trouble: it was an inherited gift.

At this time, also, he made a first brief excursion into journalism—as an editor-proprietor. He founded, and wrote, *The Critic*, one of several competing school journals. There was only one issue. Although Mr. Churchill has been among the most prolific of part-time journalists, the only papers he has ever had the joy of controlling have been *The Critic* and *The British Gazette*.

The boy still remained delicate. Catching a chill on the breezy Brighton sea-front, he nearly died of double pneumonia, and the chest-weakness left behind made it seem desirable, when the time came for his entry at a public school, that he should steer clear of the Thames Valley fogs. Consequently, instead of going to Eton, his father's old school, he was entered at Harrow, which stands high. The Spring of 1888 saw him an Harrovian, wearing the comical, broad-brimmed straw hat, held in place by elastic at the back, which is the proud badge of the tribe. It suited his large head abominably, though possibly not worse than some of his later fancies in headgear.

Young Winston's performance at the entrance examination was a fiasco. He had taken a particular dislike to Latin at Brighton, and nothing that he disliked could he ever learn. Yet Latin, in those days, was the one thing that really mattered at The Hill. He could not answer a solitary question in the Latin paper. So he was admitted on the lowest rung of the ladder.

Nor did he succeed in climbing very far during the half-dozen years before he passed out to Sandhurst. One doubts if he ever tried. He had a precocious contempt for the system, which even in later years (when he became, as befitted a scion of the Governing Class, a champion of the public schools) he found it difficult to gloss over. There was too much pose about the place; too little hard tackling of difficult, dangerous jobs.

Even the games were annoyingly orthodox. There was no romance about them. His idea of football—at any rate junior football—was to gallop round shouting "For St. George, St. Dunstan and the Devil!" But the school didn't much like that sort of kiddishness.

Winston's reply was that he didn't much like the school, or the school's idea of football. He even went so far as to organise a campaign against football during the examination period known as Trials Week, on the ground that it was contrary to an ancient statute of the school and

was, indeed, injurious to serious study. With his chum, Jack Milbanke (killed later at Suvla Bay, to his bitter grief), he actually won the point, but it is doubtful if it added to his popularity.

In the meantime, Churchill's reputation as a rather eccentric dunce was growing. He never emerged from the Junior School, but achieved the glory of being appointed Head of the Fags when he grew too old to be a fag himself. In spite of a powerful memory that thought nothing of committing a vast quantity of Macaulay's *Lays* to memory and declaiming them with striking success in a competition open to the whole school, he simply refused to learn Latin. The refusal, one suspects, was not by conscious effort of the will, but the consequence of a subconscious inhibition. His French was bad, his Greek consisted of the alphabet, his "maths" were childish.

In this humiliating situation he again took to journalism, the stay and consolation of so many later years. The editor of the school magazine was one Leopold Amery, of the Sixth, and head of his House—distinguished then, as he was to be distinguished in years to come. Some time earlier young Churchill had been guilty of a shocking *faux pas* in his relations with this school notable. Being bored with life, and mistaking the naked Amery for a fag, on account of his size, Winston had casually pushed him from behind into the great swimming pool. Mr. Amery tells the story to-day with a chuckle, for the horrified and apologetic Winston had explained his mistake by observing that his father, who was a *great* man, was *also small*.

At all events, the Editor of *The Harrowian* now bore no grudge, and gladly permitted Churchill to launch, under the pen-name "Junius Junior", a vigorous attack upon the management of the school "gym", as reflected in the arrangements for an athletic demonstration.

"What I ask," wrote "Junius Junior", "and what the school asks—and will ask—is: Why did so few boys do anything? Why was the performance watched from the

gallery by two members of the School Eight? . . . All these things serve to suggest that there is something rotten in the state of Denmark. I have merely stated the facts; it is not for me to offer an explanation of them. To you, sirs, as directors of public opinion, it belongs to lay bare the weakness."

"We have omitted a portion of our correspondent's letter which seemed to us to exceed the limits of fair criticism," ran an editorial note.

At least one other success Churchill did score at school. He won the Public Schools Championship for fencing. It was a military form of exercise in which he took a genuine interest, and the élan of his attack is said to have been remarkable. Unhappily, his sword-arm was crippled for life only a few years later. He pulled out the shoulder when climbing, with an excess of impetuosity, up the quayside on his first landing in India. Never again was he able to play tennis; and at times polo, which he adored, was only possible with the upper part of the striking-arm strapped to his side. In the charge of the Lancers at Omdurman he decided at the last moment to put away his sword, and fight with a Mauser pistol.

All idea of Churchill going to a university was abandoned during the last year or two at Harrow, and he settled down to getting ready for Sandhurst and the Army. It was the only career, Lord Randolph sadly reckoned, that such a dunce was fit for. Unless, indeed, some opening could be found in the colonies! Besides, hadn't the lad 1,500 tin soldiers, and didn't he show real intelligence, at any rate, in playing with them?

So Sandhurst let it be. Winston was agreeable enough. At any rate he would be free at Sandhurst from the accursed Latin. He hated those dead languages; and what was the good of them, anyway?

The first distant contact with the Army brought him luck, at the preliminary examination. Every other examination he had muffed, but this time he badly wanted to

win. Therefore, on the night before, knowing that map-drawing from memory would be one of the tests, he put the names of a score of countries into a hat, and drew. New Zealand came out first. He studied the map of New Zealand. The first instruction on the next day's exam. paper was to draw a map of New Zealand. He obeyed with brilliant success. A portent on the threshold!

But there was to be a pause, of the lad's own making, before he reached Sandhurst. The incident strikes one as symbolic, coming on the threshold of such a career. Young Churchill was nearly eighteen when he went down to Bournemouth for a few weeks' change of air with his cousins, the Guests and Wimbornes. Two of them were schoolboys, and he still loved romping with schoolboys. One day when they were chasing him he found himself cornered on a bridge across one of the deeper cliff "chines": there was a pursuer at each end. Churchill jumped, trusting to a fir-tree to break his fall. It failed him, and he crashed thirty feet. When the doctors examined him they found a ruptured kidney.

It was no more than a trifling lack of judgment—a good idea not sufficiently worked out: sound strategy, bad tactics; a little too much impetuosity, considering the serious danger involved. Nearly fifty years later Mr. Churchill had the curiosity to have worked out for him the precise foot-poundage of his impact with Mario Constasino's taxicab in New York, and found it to have been equivalent to a fall of just thirty feet. But the Bournemouth fall laid him up for the best part of a year, instead of a few weeks.

There is no piece of bad luck, however, of which Winston Churchill has not made good use. It is this quality of indomitable resilience, this alchemic power of transmuting circumstance, that has, more than anything else, marked him off from other men. Nature itself thrusts and waits, waits and thrusts. The result may not be the survival of the best in Nature, but is certainly the survival of the fittest.

So it has been with this singularly vital and completely "natural" man.

What the fall at Bournemouth enabled Winston to do for the first time was to get in touch with his parents and their circle. His long convalescence was spent at the Churchills' town house. Although "Randy" was tottering to his ruin, had indeed already taken the fatal plunge from the Chancellorship and was in failing health, all the young notables in Torydom, and many of the older ones, gravitated to this focus of vigorous political thinking.

Up till now the young man had not taken much trouble to understand why, or how, it was that his father was "a great man", as he had so emphatically described him at Harrow. Now, the knowledge of what his father was, or had been, began to excite him intensely. He met Joseph Chamberlain in the social circle, and heard from his own lips the story of the battle between Tory Democracy and the Old Gang. He was fascinated and awed by the drama of Gladstone's last great fight—this Gladstone whom he had pictured hitherto as not much more than a malignant old pest who was his father's enemy.

From the Members' Gallery in the House of Commons, at the second reading debate on the second Home Rule Bill, he watched and heard—and wondered. In his mother's drawing-room he drank in day after day a flood of political chatter—and wondered. In his father's library he read his father's speeches—and wondered.

"The young men of England are joining the Tory Party in great numbers: the youth of England is on our side. . . .

"Youth is indeed a great calamity, and it appears to excite the worst passions of human nature among those who no longer possess it. We may, I think, chase away such depressing reflections by remembering that youth is a calamity which grows less bitter and less poignant as the years go by, and that by the sheer process of living and surviving we must each in our turn approach the summit of the wave."

Wonderful, wonderful father! They called him "Yahoo Churchill", "Cheeky Randy". They tried to make him look contemptible in their cartoons. Let them go on trying!

He, the dunce of the family, would be revenged upon the whole pack of curs and traitors. His father had been too busy to understand, during those stupid school years, but the time would come when he would be as proud of his Winston as Joe Chamberlain was of his Austen, or Gladstone of his Herbert. Aye, prouder!

But all through that year of convalescence a chill dread deepened. Mother and son felt it tightening on their hearts. There was something wrong with the speeches . . . the newspapers were kindly cold . . . people were whispering. . . . In a few months Lord Randolph Churchill was dead.

Before that happened Winston had at last attained the goal of Sandhurst. His father was terribly vexed that he had come out so low in the list that it was difficult for him to get into anything but the cavalry, where the competition for vacancies was reduced by the prospect of heavy subsequent expense. So vexed was he that he warned the young man against ending up a mere "social wastrel".

Much as Winston shrank from his father's contempt, he himself was vastly pleased. The Army in general was jolly, but the cavalry in particular was twice as jolly. He loved horses and enjoyed riding. Cavalry uniforms were gorgeous, cavalry manners romantic, cavalry war-duties dashing. And if the cavalry was expensive, were there not ways of making money, even in the Army? Had he not health and energy—yes, and brains?

Winston woke up. His education (just begun at the age of eighteen in London) went ahead by leaps and bounds at Sandhurst. He settled down to the study of purely military problems with a new power of concentration. The great engine of his intellect began at last to draw its proper sustenance from the great reservoir of his spirit and physique.

It is conceivable that some subtle change in the metabolism of the body had been brought about by the

rupture and repair of a vital organ. More likely, he had merely reached at last the right environment for the happy flowering of his faculties. There is plenty of evidence—such as the famous episode of his leadership in the cadets' battle on the Empire Promenade against Mrs. Ormeston Chant's "prudes on the prowl"—that he was still an adolescent at twenty: some will argue that, in essentials, he has never passed beyond the stage of adolescence. But it was an adolescence that was already burgeoning with petals of genius.

In the spring of 1895 he passed gladly out of his schooldays into the congenial world of the British Army. His regiment was the 4th Hussars, stationed at Aldershot.

II

CHURCHILL THE SOLDIER

I. CUBANS AND PATHANS

WINSTON CHURCHILL HAS at different times served as a regimental officer in the following units of the British Army:

4th Hussars	Oxfordshire Yeomanry
31st Punjab Infantry	2nd Grenadier Guards
36th Dogras	6th Royal Scots Fusiliers
21st Lancers	Oxfordshire Artillery
S.A. Light Horse	

He has commanded troops on active service in Asia, Africa and Europe, and has been an observer of active service in the West Indies, which may be reckoned as part of a fourth continent. In World War One he held the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and would have been a brigadier-general if French had not been called home.

The width of his military experience is therefore unquestionable, whatever estimate may be formed of its depth. The rolling stone may not have gathered much military moss, but it is arguable that nobody wants moss. That, at least, is how Churchill himself came to view his career in relation to the careers of a good many of the army and navy chiefs with whom events brought him into contact and conflict. He was quite sure that he had kept his restless sword sharp and bright while other swords had been rusting in comfortable scabbards.

As a youngster, the idea of soldiering was the one idea that held him. Now, at twenty-one, he fell in love with the Army—the dear old British Army of cavalry charges on Aldershot Plain, and stately mess dinners, and spit-and-polish. There was something in the cavalry officer's attitude to life and civilisation—an ornamental masculinity, may one term it?—that appealed to the very roots of his nature. Those roots sprang from the soil of the governing classes on both sides of the Atlantic, and here in an Aldershot cavalry barracks was surely the fine flower of the governing class of England.

"Fundamentally," said his bosom friend, Lord Birkenhead, many years later, "he has always been, of our generation, the most sincere and fervid believer in the stately continuity of English life."

Sir Ian Hamilton, another intimate, said the same: "I have always felt that Winston's coat of many colours was originally dipped in a vat of blue; a good fast natural Tory background, none of your synthetic dyes."

Aldershot at first, then, seemed like his spiritual home. He saw war presented as a gentleman's game, probably the only first-class game for a gentleman. The trouble was that there was so little of it. There had been no fighting for many years, and the only sort of fighting one could imagine possible within the lifetime of serving soldiers was an occasional scrap with Indians, or niggers, or yellow men. The training of troops, though strenuously carried on, was

a delightful piece of make-believe, which it was a man's duty to take as seriously as possible for the sake of the prestige of Queen and Country, and the authority of the Government.

One of the few young men who succeeded in taking it all very seriously was Winston Churchill. His lively imagination built castles in the air to be stormed and subdued. He saw danger calling. He thrilled to the idea of coming danger. How he would love it when it came!

And he did. Picture a stolid British sergant, with dripping lance and dusty, sweat-seamed features, being asked (as he was) by 2nd-Lieut. Churchill at Omdurman: "Have you *enjoyed* yourself?" And, eighteen years after that, the Tommies in Flanders trenches being cheerily encouraged by Colonel Churchill, standing on the fire-step, with: "Don't you *like* war?" It was the same officer of the Scots Fusiliers who had told his men, in an address not long before, that "war is a game to be played with a smiling face".

The more this strange fellow saw of war the more he *liked* it; although, in justice be it said, the more he saw of war the more he condemned its horrors. After all, was not horrible war the most exciting sort of living, and what was life worth unless it was exciting?

So when 2nd-Lieut. Churchill, of the 4th Hussars, heard there was a war in Cuba, though only a second-rate sort of a war, he made up his mind to get there the moment he had a chance. The chance came in November, 1895, when, as a soldier, he was seven months old and was entitled to a spell of leave.

Finance was the first consideration. With an allowance of only £500 a year, plus his trifling Army pay, and visible assets consisting of a few polo ponies, the young man had to find some supplementary source of supplies, and naturally turned to journalism. His father had written for the *Daily Graphic* during a tour of South Africa, and from the *Daily Graphic* the son now obtained a commission for a series of letters from Cuba. Badly paid, but better than

nothing. Besides, from henceforth he would be entitled to write himself down "journalist", as he was to do on his first parliamentary nomination paper.

The second consideration was how to get accepted and recognised by the Spanish army, under the command of General Campos. Here, young Churchill took again a first step of vast importance to his career: he made use of one of his father's friends. It has always been a point of pride that, until late in life, he inherited next to nothing except those friends. They were his working capital, and he used it daringly to the last penny.

In the case of the Cuban enterprise the friend he applied to was Sir Henry Wolff, then our ambassador at Madrid, formerly a member of the Fourth Party in the House of Commons. Would Sir Henry get him introductions to the military big-wigs in Cuba? Sir Henry would be delighted to serve the son of his old colleague, Lord Randolph. Accordingly, in November, having secured at Aldershot the companionship of a kindred spirit in adventure, he set out for the only spot on earth at which there was real fighting.

General Campos seems to have felt vastly honoured by the arrival of the two young officers. Evidently, he argued, the great new British Empire must be keenly interested in the fortunes, policy and prowess of the great old Spanish Empire; else why should it be taking such pains to see that the military operations against the Cuban rebels were watched by so distinguished an observer as the son of the famous Milor' Randolph Churchill?

Winston made himself exceedingly agreeable. The camp life was jolly, the Spaniards all courtesy, the food and the insects a curious adventure in themselves. To be sure, there was not much killing, and the enemy was scarcely more than a rumour in a dense and human jungle, except when bullets sped by from nowhere to nowhere. But the hum of those secret bullets was alone worth the crossing of thousands of miles of ocean. He would be able to describe to the fellows at Aldershot how it felt to be "under fire". Not that he

would brag about it; a casual mention, and the knowledge that they knew, would be enough.

General Campos presented him before his leave was up with the medal of the Spanish Order of Military Merit, of the first class. And medals were at a premium at Aldershot in that period of profound Victorian peace. He came home feeling like a youngster who had been blooded and given the brush.

When, in the early spring of 1896, he was back in London Churchill found Society, as well as the rest of England, beginning to get ready for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The season was the gayest of the gay, and the young soldier of fortune, fresh from a sort-of-a-kind of active service, his stories aromatic with the romance of Havana and spiced with hints about the horrid uses of the sharp Cuban machete, flung himself into its whirlpool with characteristic impetuosity. If the governing class, to which he belonged, was really fading out, it was at least enjoying a glorious sunset.

He was waiting to sail for India with his regiment. The 4th Hussars were to be stationed at Bangalore, the capital city of Mysore, and expected to be away from home for a number of years. But barrack life at Bangalore when it came did not at all fit in with Churchill's idea of soldiering. The routine of the barrack square, the discipline of the cavalry mess, the insipid flirtations in cantonments, equally bored him. He made the discovery that British cavalry officers in India actually seemed to live for one thing only—polo. He, too, was ready to worship at the shrine of the Great God Polo, just as he was ready to go to church, but he was no more ready to devote his whole existence to the service of the shrine than he was willing to be a parson. He fretted. Could it really be that this was the best use the Empire could make of his talents?

At home he had begun to think hard, and talk hard, about politics. Here in India he began to read hard about history, science and philosophy—Gibbon and Macaulay,

Darwin and Malthus, Schopenhauer and Plato. Inflammatory and unusual stuff for a young army officer who was determined to understand what he read, and apply what he read in action! It was his first prolonged bout of mental gymnastics, the opening course in a training that was to turn him—the dunce of Harrow School—into one of the outstanding cerebral athletes of his generation and type.

First leave from India was particularly fortunate, for it enabled him to make two invaluable friends. On the boat home he chummed up with Ian Hamilton, and they argued the rights and wrongs of the latest war in the Balkans, where their own names were destined to be linked so closely together in history. Common ground was their love of their profession of soldiering and their adventurous outlook on life. But when it came to taking sides they were at loggerheads. Churchill, with his Tory affiliations, was at that time a pro-Turk; Hamilton, always inclined to Liberalism, was a pro-Greek. They agreed to differ, and to back their respective fancies, if possible, in the field. As neither succeeded, however, in getting there they never had the chance of fighting one another. It was almost the only chance of active service that Winston missed.

The other fortunate friendship he made on this leave from India was with Sir Bindon Blood, one of the army commanders most likely to be involved in any "scrap" in the most effervescent corner of the globe, next to the Balkans—the North-West frontier of India. They met at the house of one of Churchill's kinsmen, Sir William Beresford. Sir Bindon took a great fancy to the dashing, pushful young fellow, always with an eye on the one thing that mattered, active service. He promised that if any fighting should chance to come his way he would do his best to see that Churchill shared in the fun and the glory.

The chance came next year. In the month of July Churchill was again on leave in London when news came over the wire of a Pathan revolt in the Himalayas, and a punitive expedition with Sir Bindon Blood in command.

Here was a marvellous piece of luck. A cable to Sir Bindon, reminding him of his promise; a dash overland to Brindisi to catch the next boat out; eager, but disappointed, inquiries for a reply cable at every port of call; finally, a message at Bombay to say that the general had no executive vacancy, but that 2nd-Lieut. Churchill would be welcome as an officer-war-correspondent. Those were still the easy-going days in which such an arrangement was regarded as quite normal.

No sooner suggested than done. One of the most enterprising newspapers in India was the *Allahabad Pioneer*: Churchill fixed up a commission there without much difficulty, on the strength of his work in Cuba for the *Daily Graphic*. But that would hardly show a profit, or yield much kudos. He cabled to his mother in London for help. Ever resourceful and eager to be of use, and half a newspaperwoman by upbringing, she went to the *Daily Telegraph*, and got a good order for cables and letters. And in that way was conceived the first of Winston S. Churchill's great publishing successes, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*.

"I can never doubt," wrote Winston, the journalist, presently, "which is the right end (of the wire) to be at. It is better to be making the news than taking it; to be an actor rather than a critic."

That was always his attitude as a newspaper man. Use all your opportunities as an army officer, or a Member of Parliament, or a Minister of the Crown, to make the news, and then write it up for all it is worth. It was difficult indeed to distinguish, up in the Mamund Valley of the Himalayas, between 2nd-Lieut. Churchill, 4th Hussars and 31st Punjab Infantry, and Winston Spencer-Churchill, correspondent of the *Pioneer* and *Telegraph*. Each made work for the other. Hence, in despatches: "The courage and resolution of Lieut. Winston S. Churchill, 4th Hussars, the correspondent of the *Pioneer* newspaper with the Force, who made himself useful at a critical moment."

It must have been a truly exhilarating month or two for

a man of his temperament, blest with completely congenial tasks both for mind and body, that Churchill spent in those bracing upland valleys. Some sharp fighting in September was just dangerous enough to be thoroughly enjoyable. He liked and understood the enemy, which must always be a consolation in war; for they were sturdy mountaineers, superbly courageous and with strict ideas of honour. If certain features of their code, such as full liberty to kill and mutilate the wounded, were not in accord with the British code, well, that was a matter between themselves and their God. So long as a man genuinely believed in his code and followed it with all strictness, the public school spirit would not condemn. As years added to experience, Churchill's wide tolerance, now being tested among these feral tribesmen, stood the strain through thick and thin: he never failed, in contemplation, if not in action, to see the other fellow's point of view.

Journalistically, the position, too, was ideal. A compact campaign, waged in conditions as unfamiliar to the outside world as they were picturesque, provided endless copy. It was the first bit of hot fighting by the British Army for many years, so the subject was fresh and everyone at home eager for news. Moreover, there was little competition. If he liked, he could rival Reuter's and dash off a message in the heat of the moment; if he liked, he could "polish his periods" like an Ian Hamilton writing a Dardanelles despatch. To think of it makes the modern newspaper man's mouth water.

Not that Churchill would not certainly have done brilliantly under the most strenuous of present-day conditions. He has always been almost too ready a writer. But in this first important piece of reporting, when he was still learning his job, the absence of undue strain was unquestionably an asset of value. He used it well, as he used all his assets. The "stories", as Fleet Street would now call them, created a great impression in the newspaper world as something better and brighter, and when Churchill came

to write his book it was possible to embody most of them, but little altered, in the body of that remarkably mature and self-confident piece of military history and criticism.

The criticism was taken rather badly in some quarters. Never has Churchill been able to abstain from offering advice to those in charge of any operation, military or political, in which he has played a part; seldom has he been able to phrase the advice so delicately as to fail to give offence. Thus early in his career we find one of his weak points exposed. It was a point that was to cost him dear in the battle of life.

There were those rude enough to dub *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* "a subaltern's hints to generals", and the subaltern a medal-snatcher. Winston didn't worry. He reflected that the man who gets there is justified in taking jealousy as a compliment. Besides, the sneers were a trifle compared with the praise. The book was not only splendidly reviewed and a best seller, but also drew a charming letter from the Prince of Wales! It gave the young man—he was still only twenty-three—his first thrill of success.

To appreciate what that meant, remember that up till now he had been pretty severely snubbed. The man whose good opinion he would have most valued, his father, had never thought much of him. He had done fairly well at Sandhurst, but rottenly at school. His efforts to get on in the Army had been rather resented than encouraged. Now came this sudden resounding achievement. His head was not turned: he had too good an opinion of himself to get excited; but he did determine to go one better.

Before telling the story of that next adventure it is necessary, however, to mention briefly the illuminating incident of the Tirah Field Force, which links up closely with what followed in London, but preceded by a month or two the publication of the Malakand volume.

In the late autumn of 1897 the operations against the Pathans of the Mamund Valley began to die down, just as Lieut. Churchill was mastering his awkward job as

officer in a native regiment, the 36th Dogras, and he began to look round for some more lively occupation. Above all things, he did not want to go back to barracks at Bangalore. His period of leave was wearing very thin; but surely there must be some way of tying himself up with the fighting end of the Army, seeing that he was on the spot and Bangalore two thousand miles away. What about the Tirah Expedition?

New trouble had flared up with the Afridis, fiercest of all the mountain tribes, whose stronghold was in the Tirah Valley. One of the most brilliant and experienced of the British commanders on the North-West Frontier, Sir William Lockhart, had been given command of a strong force, with orders to wipe up the Tirah Valley and put the raiders right out of business. This was now the big show.

Winston set his heart upon being in it, all the more because the expedition was not having a comfortable time. He applied for a transfer to General Lockhart's little army. The application was curtly refused. Crest-fallen, he had to go back to Bangalore, after all, to play polo and whist. As an absentee from his regiment who had been enjoying the best sort of joy-ride in the hills, for no particular reason that other Hussar officers could appreciate, he found himself none too popular in the mess. But he was by no means beaten.

During a hurried visit to Calcutta dogged patience won through. With the help of Ian Hamilton, the man who was to fight his battles on the Gallipoli Peninsula eighteen years later, he penetrated at last to the actual presence of Sir William Lockhart, and laid his piteous case before him. Sir William could not stand up against that boyish appeal, those frank blue eyes. Every other corner being already filled, he took the importunate youngster on his own staff as aide-de-camp. How could you get rid of the fellow any other way?

Unhappily, it was not much more than a formal victory. Those well-intentioned, but on the whole rather pestilential,

spoil-sports, the political officers, had been getting busy, and the Tirah campaign, which should have been thrilling, and led on to a wild terrain never before trodden by the foot of British Tommy, fizzled out feebly. Churchill soon found himself faced once more with the prospect of being bored to death at Bangalore, when, from the African continent this time, there came "ancestral voices prophesying war."

Churchill had an ancestral interest in the situation in the Sudan. When he was ten years old his father had made some of his most slashing speeches in attacking Gladstone's handling of the Gordon tragedy. The sequel to that tragedy was now at hand. The fanatical, but high-souled, rule of the Mahdi had been succeeded by the military despotism of the Khalifa, and the peaceful overlordship of Britain in Egypt was threatened by an insurgent Dervish empire to the south. Fighting between the outposts of the two empires had been dragging on for some three years, and now, with the completion of Sirdar Kitchener's strategic railway, the moment had come for the final drive on the Dervish capital of Omdurman. Desert operations were to start as soon as possible.

The news coincided with the start of a period of home leave for Lieut. Churchill. Like an unleashed dog he made tracks for London. At headquarters in Cairo he knew himself to be detested, as a subaltern with a passion for the limelight and cheek enough to criticise his superior officers in the public press. But the young man who had forced his way into the Tirah Expedition was not to be discouraged by a little thing of that sort. After all, he had his mother, his friends, and his book.

Kitchener resisted stoutly. But again at the eleventh hour fate intervened. Lord Salisbury, the veteran Prime Minister, had read *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* with keen enjoyment—more especially the passages giving advice to generals—and, hearing that the young author was in London, asked him to be good enough to come round

and have a talk. The talk was long and cordial, and ended in the author asking the Prime Minister to use his personal influence to break down the resistance of the obdurate Sirdar. Salisbury cabled a polite request to Kitchener, and Kitchener cabled back "No", or words to that effect.

Fortified, however, by this powerful alliance, Churchill was able to play his trump-card—Sir Evelyn Wood, the Adjutant-General, who had already been roped in by Lady Randolph. Taking his courage in both hands, Sir Evelyn told the young man that, whatever the Sirdar said, he could have a commission in the 21st Lancers, unpaid, and with no liability on the Government for compensation in the event of death or injury. On these terms, and with a correspondent's commission from the *Morning Post* also in his pocket, Churchill set off triumphantly for the Sudan.

II. OMDURMAN, PRETORIA, FLANDERS

The prospects of striking success, either military or journalistic, were not rosy. Churchill would be late on the scene, as a result of the narrowness of his victory in the tug-of-war between London and Cairo; it seemed doubtful if, in any case, the Lancers would get up in time for the fighting (if any); and, whatever might be Kitchener's overt line, it was certain that he would have a chilly reception from the Army as a whole, which would take its covert cue from headquarters. Had he pushed too hard this time? It was inevitable that the young man should have qualms upon the journey out.

Kitchener, as it transpired, was much too busy to bother about the activities of any young pushful. He had not wanted the lad hanging round, meddling and scribbling when there was no soldiering to do; but if the people at home were weak enough to yield to social and political influence that was their own affair. One sees him shrugging his massive shoulders and getting on with the heavy office work that was his bugbear.

Whether it is a fact that the men below were less large-minded is a point upon which opinions may fairly differ. Churchill had encountered of late so much opposition to what he considered his perfectly reasonable requests that he was probably in a mood to detect persecution where there was nothing worse than indifference and bad luck. Besides, he was a late arrival. For whatever reason, he found himself on the march to Omdurman in charge of the lame horses, and bitterly resented it. He thought the Army was trying to break his heart, and swore it shouldn't.

The time-factor was the cavalry's chief worry. But "K's" plans went like clockwork. And, by a singular chance, it was the subaltern in the 21st Lancers whom he had not wanted who trotted up to him one afternoon in the desert and brought first news of contact with the enemy. Churchill tasted the pleasure of that incident to the last drop. One imagines that Kitchener was blissfully ignorant of the young officer's identity, and would not have been deeply stirred had he known. Yet surely that momentary desert encounter may be regarded in retrospect as one of the great meetings of history. Vast issues were to hang upon the interlacing of these two lives. Agony unspeakable, in this very region of the ancient Turkish Empire, was to spring from the clash of their fundamentally hostile temperaments.

Next morning a tropic sun rose upon the field of Omdurman, veiled in desert mirage. It was the 2nd of September, 1898—the date of the last classic cavalry charge in the history of war.

Twenty thousand British faced sixty thousand Dervishes, mowing them down with disciplined gun and rifle fire. Three hundred Lancers charged into the brown of three thousand desert infantry, and lost a third of their strength. "For three minutes," wrote Churchill, exultant, "each man saw the world along his lance, under his guard, or through the back sight of his pistol. Perhaps it is possible for the whole of a man's faculties to be concentrated in

the eye, bridle-hand and trigger-finger, and withdrawn from all other parts of the body."

He shot half-a-dozen Dervishes as he galloped on his Arab polo pony through the gulley where the tribesmen fought savagely with their great curved swords to defend the sanctuary and tomb of their soldier-saint, the Mahdi.

"Did you enjoy it?" he asked one of his men. He certainly did himself, and came through unhurt. Yet the troop which would have been his if there had been no delay in London was cut to pieces, and the brilliantly promising young officer who had taken his place, 2nd-Lieut. Grenfell, was killed. Stupendous world-events would have changed their course if the two youths had changed places. But, as the one who lived wrote, "life is a whole, and luck is a whole, and no part of them can be separated from the rest".

The literary child of the charge of the 21st Lancers—the summit of the Sudan campaign in public estimation—was *The River War*, in two solid volumes. Like Churchill's other books based upon his experiences and observations as a war correspondent, its scope is vastly greater than that of mere reporting. The whole Sudanese problem is elaborately examined in the light of history, and the conduct of the campaign closely criticised.

The criticisms created more than the usual talk, because they were directed against the popular idol of the hour—Kitchener of Khartoum. Moreover, there was not much secret about the fact that Kitchener had not welcomed the presence of the correspondent of the *Morning Post*. But it would be unfair to attribute any hostile point made by Churchill to the nursing of a grudge: the points are much too characteristic of his line of thought and policy, as developed on later occasions.

First, he recorded "a very general impression that the fewer the prisoners the greater would be the satisfaction of the commander". The shrieks of "Avenge Gordon!" raised at home had, too, inclined our troops to regard the enemy as vermin. In the second place, Churchill totally

condemned the destruction of the Mahdi's tomb, and the desecration of the Mahdi's body (the head was carried off as a trophy and the body thrown into the Nile), by order of the Sirdar. "I shall not hesitate to declare," he wrote, "that to destroy what was sacred and holy to them was a wicked act of which a true Christian, no less than a philosopher, must express his abhorrence."

After Omdurman Churchill left the regular Army, against the advice of the Adjutant-General, Sir Evelyn Wood. His reasons were half financial, half political. Journalism drew him strongly, and there was evidently money in it. The book on the Malakand Field Force had brought in hard cash hand over fist. A political career was equally attractive and equally open to the son of his father. He therefore accepted an invitation to stand for the Lancashire cotton constituency of Oldham, and handed in his checks.

It was at this turning point that Churchill was "discovered" by Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe). G. W. Steevens, at that time Harmsworth's white-headed boy, had met the young prodigy on board ship, been impressed, and handed on the impression to The Chief. "Write him up," said The Chief, and Steevens did so, in the *Daily Mail*, with flamboyance, but remarkable insight and prescience, as "The Youngest Man in Europe".

"At the present moment he happens to be a soldier, but that is nothing whatever to do with his interest in the public eye. He may, and may not, possess the qualities that make a great general, but the question is of no sort of importance. In any case they will never be developed, for, if they exist, they are overshadowed by qualities which make him, almost at will, a great popular leader, a great journalist, or the founder of a great advertising business. . .

"It is not so much that he calculates how he is to make his career a success—how, frankly, he is to boom—but that he has a queer, shrewd power of introspection, which tells him his gifts and character are such as will make him boom.

"At dinner he talks and talks, and you can hardly tell

when he leaves off quoting his one ideal, Macaulay, and begins his other, Winston Churchill. What he will become who can say? At the rate he goes, there will hardly be room for him in Parliament at thirty or in England at forty."

Remember that this was written of a man of twenty-four who had published only some newspaper articles and a couple of books, and had hardly spoken in public at all. The personality that could create such an impression must clearly have been overwhelming.

Churchill's first attempt to get into Parliament by way of Oldham was a useful failure but the twelve months which followed were an *annus mirabilis* in his career. *The River War* was only just out, in October, 1899, when news came of President Kruger's ultimatum. Seven years earlier, when Winston was convalescing at his parents' town house after the Bournemouth accident, he had met Joseph Chamberlain for the first time and had enthralling talks with him about the latest Imperial sensation—a raid by a Dr. Leander Starr Jameson and his followers into Boer territory, to help the Uitlanders of Johannesburg. "Dr. Jim" had been one of Winston's heroes in those salad days. His exploit had linked up with the South African doings (almost as shocking as the Sudan doings) of the pusillanimous Gladstone, his father's inveterate foe, and he had thrilled to the cry of "Avenge Majuba!" With Kruger's ultimatum the third chapter opened stirringly.

Much ground had been covered by the young man since those early talks with the great "Joe". He had seen service, and written about it, in America, Asia and Africa. He had become a public figure and earned several thousand pounds. There was a world market for what he wrote. And he was free of the Army.

It was therefore natural that he should sign on instantly as the *Morning Post's* principal correspondent at the Front—a front, most wonderfully and thrillingly, at which, this time, white men would be fighting white men, as they had not fought for half a century.

True, the war would be over very quickly; almost everybody said so. Mr. Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, whom he went to see before he set out, and who was naturally in the confidence of the War Office, said so. The War Office was absolutely confident that, with such an able soldier as General Sir Redvers Buller in command of the finely trained and equipped British Army, the Boers would crumple up.

General opinion seemed to be that the war would end within three months, and would not cost more than £10,000,000. Churchill's only fear was that, although he would be going out on the same ship as Buller, he would be too late. The war lasted nearly three years and cost a matter of £200,000,000. But then it was the same War Office which had given such pleasant assurances to Chamberlain that had cabled to Australia, in reply to her offer of help, "Unmounted men preferred"!

The *Dunottar Castle* sailed for Table Bay on the 11th of October, with Buller and his staff and Winston Churchill on board. Average opinion, especially among the senior military officers, still was that there couldn't be much of a show, because these Boer chaps were only amateurs. The best that could be hoped was that they would put up a fight in front of Pretoria.

When the *Dunottar Castle* reached Cape Town Sir George White's force had just been nipped by the Boers in the Natal triangle, and shut up in Ladysmith. There had also been a nasty little reverse at a place called Nicholson's Nek. People were looking glum. It appeared as though these farmer-soldiers were, after all, going to give the strong, silent Buller a run for his money.

Churchill hoped so. As a war correspondent, his first urgent duty was to get as near as possible to the fighting, having due regard to his lines of communication. His old friend, G. W. Steevens, of the *Mail*, was already shut up in Ladysmith (where he perished), but it was possible to get as far as Estcourt, forty miles away, and here he found

another friend, Leopold Amery, now correspondent of *The Times*.

The episode of the armoured train followed almost at once. Armoured trains were the crazily inefficient tanks of the South African War. You took half a dozen goods-wagons; nailed to their sides the largest iron plates you could find (after drilling the plates with a few holes); packed them with soldiers, sailors and a light gun or two; attached three of the trucks to each end of a railway engine; and sent the result up-line into the enemy country to see what it could find.

An old Army friend of Churchill's, a Captain Haldane, was ordered to take one of these dangerous monstrosities on a reconnoitring expedition along the sixteen miles of track still open in the direction of Ladysmith: would Churchill care to come? Smelling a "story", Churchill jumped at the offer. With a company of Dublin Fusiliers, another of Durham Light Infantry, and some blue-jackets with an antediluvian naval gun, he climbed into one of the jimcrack iron boxes.

They started off merrily and madly, and at Chieveley junction station, between Estcourt and Colenso, they met the enemy. Two Boer field-guns opened fire. The engine-driver went ahead, and, as might have been expected, ran full tilt round the next corner into an obstruction that had been artfully placed on the line. Several of the trucks were derailed, and the engine itself trapped.

At this point Churchill took charge of what may be termed the engineering part of the job. Atkins, of the *Manchester Guardian*, who picked up the story a few hours later at Estcourt, wrote: "We heard how Churchill had walked round and round the wreckage while the bullets were spitting against the iron walls, and had called for volunteers to free the engine; how he had said 'Keep cool, men!'; and again, 'This will be interesting for my paper'; and, again, how, when the engine driver was grazed on the head and was about to escape, he had jumped in to

help him and had said, 'No man is hit twice on the same day'. The *Morning Post* man had "gone out and got the story", as they say in Fleet Street, with a vengeance.

For more than an hour the armoured train remained under fire. With infinite difficulty, the engine and rear trucks were freed and won their way back to Estcourt, leaving Churchill and the rest of the crew behind. "If it hadn't been for Churchill, not one of us would have escaped," the men testified; and many highly-coloured stories got into the papers.

Churchill was taken prisoner by Louis Botha in person, of all amazing chances. For in those days Botha was still a simple burgher. It was not till three years afterwards in London, when Botha was entitled to speak for the Boer, and Churchill for the British, people, that the two men knew how fate had served them. The pregnant first meeting of Kitchener and Churchill in the desert had its counterpart in this even stranger first meeting on the veldt. The two were to become firm friends, boundlessly respecting one another, and the young Briton's first big legislative task was to be to put through the House of Commons, as Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Campbell-Bannerman's scheme for the self-government of a United South Africa.

At the moment, however, the meeting seemed to Churchill anything but propitious. Nominally a civilian, he had, after his soldierly conduct, to be treated as a soldier or shot out-of-hand. As the Boers were gentlemanly fighters he was treated as a soldier—and put in prison. It is one of the outstanding examples of Winston's "check" that he should have claimed to be treated as a civilian and released.

Nothing could have been luckier for him than the Boers' refusal to listen to such nonsense. By imprisoning him at Pretoria, and then carelessly letting him escape, they laid the foundation of his fortunes deep and sure. For the only thing this young man needed was the opportunity to advertise himself. Given that, his astonishing natural gifts could be trusted to take him somewhere near the top of the tree.

He was bored in the company of sixty other British officer prisoners at the State Model Schools, Pretoria, as he had been bored in the company of the officers of the 4th Hussars at Bangalore; only more so. There was nothing to do but argue, play cards, and plot escapes. Winston had little use for the second, but was a great hand at the first and last. When arguing, "they all talked at once, especially Churchill", an Irish officer reported later. When plotting he was keen on a mass escape, but even his eloquent advocacy failed to put the plan through.

He therefore escaped alone. There was no deeply thought-out scheme. He just climbed the wall at night when the sentries had their backs turned, and nobody else was quick enough to follow. Then he walked through Pretoria and jumped a freight train. Pondering on this and other marvelous examples of his luck, it is difficult to imagine any man's judgment not being, in the long run, influenced by such evidence that he and his enterprises were under a special Providence.

Take the next wild improbability. After thirty-six hours of hopeless wandering and horrible suspense, during which he excites the dietetic interest of a monstrous vulture, he has a mystic prompting. Something tells him to go to a kraal dimly seen towards the horizon. He obeys. It is not a kraal at all, but a solidly built house, and a solid English voice answers his knock. It is the voice of Mr. John Howard, mines manager, and the only possible friend for twenty miles, except—wonder crowning wonder—Mr. Dewsnap, of Oldham (of all places in the world) who is also there.

Not only were they friends, but they had at hand the one perfect place in which to hide the fugitive—a coal mine. Churchill was hurried down the shaft as soon as he had been fed, and stayed there among the rats until it was possible to arrange for his despatch to Lorenzo Marques, on Delagoa Bay, three hundred miles away, disguised as a bale of wool. Until the last moment when he stepped off the freight wagon it was touch and go; but through it all

he was sustained by the ineffable inner glory, known only to lucky newspaper men, of having got the story of a lifetime.

The hue-and-cry was keen. To have let this notorious character give them the slip amounted, for the Boers, to a national humiliation. They offered £25 for his return, dead or alive, in public notices describing him as an Englishman of indifferent build walking with a forward stoop, "pale appearance, red-brownish hair, small and hardly noticeable moustache, talks through his nose and cannot pronounce the letter S properly". The unflattering document is one of Mr. Churchill's most treasured possessions to-day.

Natal, Cape Colony, Britain, the Empire went wild with joy at the escape of the hero of Chieveley. Winston played up to the Empire. It was his duty, for the Empire had struck a bad patch and he was its one bright spot, its lucky mascot. Bands and flags welcomed him, and he acknowledged them in patriotic speeches that raised enthusiasm to fever-point.

Journalistically, he proved completely worthy of the praises and prophecies of Steevens and the *Daily Mail*. The lemon of the adventure was squeezed of its drama till the pips squeaked. The "gigantic vulture", with its "extravagant interest" in his condition, and its "hideous gurglings", became a national emblem; while in the churches his "long and earnest prayer for guidance" to "a Higher Power that interferes in the eternal sequence of cause and effect" was favourably commented upon.

Not unnaturally, spiteful comment was also plentiful, but Churchill had been well seasoned to that, and the nastier the notes he received from candid friends, or the more sarcastic became the sneers of the Radical newspapers that had not been favoured with his contributions, the more he gloried in this evidence of *réclame*. Had not the *Daily Mail* said, through the mouth of its most brilliant prophet, that he could, if he chose, found a great advertisement business?

Nobody realised, however, better than Churchill that romance was not enough. It was no more than the flashing

facet that drew attention to the diamond, and the diamond was no more than a jewel on the finger of a great man—a Man of Destiny (for that was how he had already come to regard himself)—with a message for his country. So we soon find in his despatches to the *Morning Post* that note of prescience and grave criticism which, throughout his career, he was to strike again and again immediately after one of his pyrotechnic displays.

On the morrow of his escape, and only a couple of months after the beginning of the war, this passage appears in one of his despatches: "The individual Boer, mounted in suitable country, is worth from three to five regular soldiers. The power of modern rifles is so tremendous that frontal attacks must often be repulsed. The extraordinary mobility of the enemy protects his flanks. The only way of treating them is either to get men equal in character and intelligence or, failing the individual, huge masses of troops. . . .

"There is plenty of room here for a quarter of a million men. . . . More irregular corps are wanted. Are the gentlemen of England fox-hunting? Why not a Leicestershire Light Horse?"

Again, three months later (March, 1900): "It is strange that soldiers in the field should hold more tolerant views than prevail at home. . . . Beware of driving men to desperation: even a cornered rat is dangerous. We desire a speedy peace, and the last thing we want is that this war should enter on a guerilla phase. Those who desire an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth ought to ask themselves whether such barren spoils are worth five years' 'bloody partizan warfare'."

By the time he was writing thus Churchill was back in the ranks of the Army. It was the reward he had asked of Buller, and been granted. That is to say, he was once again a soldier-correspondent, holding this time a commission in an irregular mounted formation, a mixed lot of colonials and adventurers, known as the Sakabulus, or, as

Churchill nicknamed them on account of the feathers in their slouch hats, the Cockyollybirds. It was the ideal life. Round the camp fire there were none of the reticences and inhibitions and gentlemanly modesties of the Regular cavalry mess. Yarn-spinning was part of the recognised fun of the field. Perhaps for the first and last time in his Army career nobody smiled secretly. He was a Wild Goose among Wild Geese.

He came scathless through the massacre at Spion Kop. Joining Dundonald's column, he was one of the first to enter Ladysmith, after two months of pretty stiff fighting, with 5,000 casualties, and to greet his faithful ally, Ian Hamilton.

Then, having obtained leave of absence from his loose attachment to the Light Horse, on to Pretoria, to canter one fine morning in June up to the State Model Schools and release with his own hand the prisoners from whom he had parted so precipitately seven months earlier. It was the finish of a fairy tale, and the Fairy Prince still had the bigger years of his life before him. He would be twenty-six in November.

Fifteen years pass. Once more he is to see active service.

The Gallipoli enterprise, upon which he had staked his reputation and national popularity, was, towards the close of 1915, petering out in dismay and disillusionment. Lord Fisher's resignation from the Admiralty had inevitably been followed, after a decent interval, by Churchill's resignation from the Government. Abandonment of the heroic attempt to reach Constantinople was clearly coming soon, and Winston refused to accept even partial responsibility. In this dark hour he sought the shelter of his old profession, the anodyne of danger.

Strict chronology would insist upon the story of that last military adventure being told at a later stage, but a book which aims at the delineation of character rather than the telling of history must sometimes ignore chronology. In the present case it will only involve a brief excursion.

Lord French's is the name that serves as the connecting link between the two episodes, South Africa and Flanders. He sent for Churchill directly he heard, in the Autumn of 1915, of his decision to return to the Army and offered him a brigade, which he declined, saying, "I am a professional soldier who knows war, but not this kind of war. 'Colonel' yes; 'Brigadier-General' no, until I've learnt my job".

French, therefore, gave him a battalion in the Grenadier Guards, with the promise of early promotion when he had had experience in the line, and four or five weeks later completed plans for him to take over the command of a brigade of the 19th Division. All was arranged; even a dinner to celebrate the event had been held at Divisional Headquarters; when French—who had been fully aware for some weeks that (to use his own words) he was "riding at single anchor"—was called home to receive the news of his supersession by Haig, and, incidentally, the news that the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) vetoed Churchill's new appointment. Haig is believed to have been quite agreeable, but the Prime Minister shrank from the political storm that would have been bound to break the moment the appointment was gazetted.

Returning crestfallen, French broke the bitter news himself to Churchill. It was one of the heaviest blows the latter had had to bear. "I have never," writes General Seely in his memoirs, "in all our forty years of close friendship seen him so disappointed and hurt."

Instead of the hoped-for command of a brigade he was transferred to a colonelcy in the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers, and settled down for another month or more to the intensive study of the art and craft of fighting in the mud behind sandbags. Hard work was the only salve for his chagrin, and he spared himself neither night nor day. One of his lectures on the habits and history of the louse became notorious; his headquarters in a farmhouse at "Plug Street" (Ploegsteert) were a centre for the discussion of every sort of new idea; his charm and energy and genuine

understanding of human nature soon made him immensely popular even among those who had started by being most doubtful about a colonel who was "a damned politician".

Publicity inevitably played about the head of the battalion. Lord Birkenhead, the colonel's kindred spirit and intimate, was amusingly arrested. The songs of another intimate, Colonel Seely, became famous. So also did Colonel Churchill's polite reply to a fussy general who had complained of the danger of his dispositions that this was "a dangerous war". The first thing of which he was reminded when Mario Constatino's taxicab hit him on Fifth Avenue was the noise made by a shell that burst in the "dangerous" farmhouse at "Plug Street".

Through it all he acted upon his own precept that "war is a game to be played with a smiling face". But it was hard to keep smiling. News of the evacuation of Gallipoli did not make it easier, and hard on its heels came the announcement that the battalion on which he had grown so keen was to be disbanded.

This, together with strong pressure from influential public men at home—notably Carson, C. P. Scott and Markham—to return to his seat in Parliament and help to create a strong fighting opposition to certain of the Asquith policies, decided him to ask leave to resign his commission. In the early summer of 1916 he came back from the Front doggedly determined, as his effective military career was finished, to carve himself a new niche in the House of Commons.

III

WINSTON, M.P.

IT WAS AT the end of the year 1898, while Churchill was writing his account of the Sudan campaign under the title *The River War*, and before he had done anything in politics

beyond the delivery of a few preliminary speeches at Oldham, that the discovery of this new star had been made by the *Daily Mail*, as told in the previous chapter.

In after years Harmsworth was fully entitled to wear the feather in his cap. As for Churchill himself, it was the right place, from every point of view, for the first announcement to be made, for he was in perfect tune at that time not only with Harmsworth's Imperial policy, but (what was much more important) with his inner spirit. The souls of Winston and the *Daily Mail* throbbed in unison to the lilt of the life-urge. The essential thing was to be up and doing.

In a fine frenzy of activity, the young man had helped to fill up the racing hours between the charge at Omdurman and the election at Oldham with a dash to India for a polo match. His old regiment, the 4th Hussars, was out for the Indian Army championship, or some such trophy, and was not likely to win it without Churchill. He was on the threshold of his first electoral campaign and had a big book, on his last military campaign, on the stocks, but what of that? He could take a voyage to India, and some gruelling polo, in his stride at that age.

Unfortunately, serious trouble with his right shoulder—which he had wrenched when climbing on to the quay at an earlier landing, as told already—developed before he reached this new field of battle, and he had to play with the arm (his pistol arm at Omdurman) strapped to his side. Nevertheless, his play was brilliant, and his team won. He was riding thus on the summit of the wave of fortune, and in the highest possible spirits, when Steevens met him on board ship and wrote the famous panegyric. "There will be hardly room for him in Parliament at thirty, or in England at forty."

It was a greatly developed Winston Churchill who returned to Oldham a year later—developed in his powers, in his public position, and in his financial resources. The South African adventure had been exploited to the uttermost.

He had not had to fight for fame; it had been thrust upon him by his dæmon. His shoulders had already begun to bow, quite literally, beneath the conscious burden of Destiny. The wander-years were over. At twenty-six he felt the time had come to settle down to a great public career in the service of the State.

We get a picture of the physical impression he created at this time from the American journalist, Julian Ralph, writing on October 2 in the *Daily Mail* :

"Already Mr. Churchill's head is carried with a droop which comes to those who read and study hard. When he is thinking he drops his head forward as if it were heavy. That is how you see him at one moment—a pose prophetic of what is too likely to fasten itself upon him before he reaches middle age. But it requires two plates to take a fair photograph of him, for the next time you look at him he has sprung to his feet with the eagerness of a boy, his pale blue eyes are sparkling, his lips are parted, he is talking a vocal torrent, and hands and arms are driving home his words."

Ten days later Churchill was to deliver another of his milestone speeches—this time at the Constitutional Club. The subject was "The future of the Unionist Party", and the general sense was that the party had no future unless it adopted some colourable imitation of the Radical slogan, "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform". He was harking back again to the device upon the tattered flag, making it the central feature of a new programme of Tory Democracy.

So now for the next move. A bye-election was in progress which afforded the opportunity to make it. Churchill wrote a "letter to an elector" in which he expressed the opinion that "the time has come when Free Traders of all parties should form one line of battle against the common foe". This he followed up with a speech at Halifax containing the words, "Thank God for the Liberal Party!"

That was too much even for the long-suffering Conservatives of Oldham. So long as their Member confined himself to attacking his own party leaders they were willing to call him unconventional rather than disloyal, and to balance the fame his brilliance conferred upon Oldham against the damage he might be doing to the country. But to offer up in public a thanksgiving for the existence of the Opposition was really going too far. They met in conclave and passed a vote of no confidence.

Even this was not enough to dislodge Churchill at once from the Parliamentary Party, much less to make him resign his seat and seek a new mandate from the electors. But it crystallised the situation. He continued to sit for some weeks more among Ministerialists, while quite openly associating and sympathising with the Opposition.

It was an impossible state of affairs. The session of 1904, with an exasperated country contemptuously watching the strange contortions of the Balfour Ministry, would have been stormy enough in any case, but the presence of Churchill immediately behind the Treasury bench was a maddening irritant. His "uppishness" was felt to be actually offensive. Hatred took the place of annoyance; and he seemed to court it.

Temper at last rose to such a pitch that one night Mr. Balfour walked out when Churchill rose, and 250 Ministerialists followed—a most marked discourtesy, as Sir John Gorst put it mildly. An invitation to Churchill from the Liberals of North-West Manchester to fight that seat soon followed, and early in May he made a striking speech at the Free Trade Hall in moving a vote of thanks to Mr. John Morley. Parts of it formed a confession of faith well worth quoting.

"We want," said Churchill, "a Government that will think a little more about the toiler at the bottom of the mine and a little less about the fluctuations of the share market in London. We want a Government which, instead of looking mainly abroad, will look mainly, if not, I think,

entirely at home. We want a Government and a policy which will think the condition of a slum in an English city is not less worthy of the attention of statesmen and of Parliament than the jungle of Somaliland.

"That is the kind of Government which we may be able to obtain. That is the kind of Government which Mr. Chamberlain says will 'after a brief interval be hissed off the stage'. Well, let us get it first, and then we will show what we will do with the hissing."

It is not difficult to hear in imagination the thunder of applause that the peroration brought from the throats of the members of the National Liberal Federation. Nor to picture the silent fury of the party in whose ranks the speaker was still nominally numbered in the House of Commons. A fortnight later Churchill crossed the floor, and took his place beside Mr. Lloyd George.

In this fresh company—not alone with L. G., but also with his old opponent, Walter Runciman, with Reginald McKenna, and the rest of the Liberal mounted infantry—he was able to snipe Mr. Balfour from new angles, with greater freedom and renewed enjoyment. He drew the attention of the House and the country to the unedifying spectacle of the Tory party fighting over their Prime Minister "like dogs worrying a bone", and chaffed him with unmerciful persistence upon his acrobatic agility in eluding the teeth of the hounds.

It was characteristic of Balfour that he never put the weight of his intellect behind a return blow that would really hurt or leave a scar; and characteristic of English political life that the two men were, within a few years, on the friendliest of terms. There is no great public figure of whom Churchill has written with more persistent kindness—a kindness so marked that one cannot help associating it with a touch of lingering compunction. The elder man went out of his way to be genial and complimentary in later days. Yet the irony of the situation cannot have escaped him when Mr. Asquith invited him to succeed Churchill at

the Admiralty in the second year of the World War One, and it fell to his lot to cancel the order for all but one of the eighteen experimental tanks which Churchill had put in hand.

Churchill has never done things by halves. Having joined the Liberal Party, he adopted the whole Liberal programme with an imaginative enthusiasm that left the majority of his colleagues standing, if not gasping.

No man was more in demand than he at the Cobden Centenary celebrations which in 1904 helped to add to the fury of the fiscal battle, and some of his most brilliant orations were delivered up and down the country when proposing some such resolution as that "this meeting declares its enthusiastic adherence to the principles of Free Trade, Peace and Retrenchment, and Reform for which Cobden laboured, and its belief that only through the fuller application of those principles can the industry and commerce of our country be firmly established and the well-being of the people secured".

There is a biographical sketch, published in 1905 by the late Mr. MacCallum Scott, M.P., which gives an almost startling picture of the way in which Churchill was regarded by the more fervid of his Liberal admirers in those days, and the way in which they believed that he regarded himself.

"Churchill," wrote Mr. MacCallum Scott, "is a fatalist. He feels upon himself the hand of Destiny. He is the instrument of some great purpose of Nature, only half disclosed as yet—a soul charged with a tremendous voltage of elemental energy. In the miraculous nature of some of his escapes, in the strange sequence of chances and accidents, he seemed to trace a design that was conscious. . . ."

"Small wonder if he began to think that there must be before him some averting hand, or that he began to surrender himself to the promptings of an inward voice bidding him risk all and dare everything for the ideals which were part of his being."¹

¹ A. MacCallum Scott, *Winston Spencer Churchill*, Methuen, 1905.

Stead was sure he was a "psychic". Churchill suspected that he was right, but was himself only quite sure of one thing—that he had boundless energy which even a strenuous parliamentary career could not fully employ. He therefore set about writing the life of his father, which he completed before the end of the Balfour Parliament. It made him yet another literary reputation, and remains to-day, by the general consent of those best able to judge, one of the most vivid and informing political biographies in the language. With the consciousness of this duty well done, he flung himself gaily, towards the end of 1905, into the next great fight.

IV

KING'S MINISTER

I. PEACE, RETRENCHMENT AND REFORM

WHEREVER CHURCHILL WAS there you might be sure the fray would be thickest, so in the General Election of January, 1906, North-West Manchester stood out as a "banner constituency". There were two issues before the country—Free Trade *versus* Protection, and the administration of the newly-acquired South African provinces, crystallised by the Liberals in the two words, "Chinese slavery". But the position was complicated by the fact that when Campbell-Bannerman formed his Liberal Government on the resignation of Balfour at the end of 1905 he had made the member for Oldham Under Secretary for the Colonies, and Churchill knew that the new administration had no intention whatever of immediately repatriating the Chinese "Slaves".

On Free Trade he had made his constituency and the country think in terms of Manchester *versus* Birmingham, a territorial symbolism that appealed to everybody's sporting instincts. The captain of the visiting team was

Mr. Joynson-Hicks—the "Jix" of later years, who became Lord Brentford—a brilliant electioneer who could hit hard and take blows with a smile and was hardly less of a "publicity merchant" than Winston himself. Each enjoyed the other.

Churchill's South African experiences as well as his ministerial office also helped to focus the limelight upon anything he said in regard to "Chinese slavery"—the new system of working the South African mines with indentured Chinamen which had been sanctioned by the Balfour Government soon after the declaration of peace. The stunt (a word not then invented) was run for all it was worth by the Radical party managers, who rightly judged it had more election value than arguments about fiscal policy; and Churchill had to pick his steps gingerly.

Hence the extraordinary vogue acquired by his expression "terminological inexactitude" when he was back in the House of Commons. "The contract," were his exact words, "may not be a desirable contract, but it cannot be, in the view of his Majesty's Government, classified as 'slavery' in the extreme acceptance of the word without some risk of terminological inexactitude." The incident is a good example of Churchill's verbal adroitness.

The election in North-West Manchester gave him a majority of 1,200, which, in those days of far smaller electorates, constituted a sweeping victory. He had in fact captured Manchester as completely as Chamberlain had captured Birmingham. In "C.B.'s" Government Asquith was Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lloyd George at the Board of Trade, while Churchill remained Under-Secretary for the Colonies, his chief, Lord Elgin, being in the House of Lords. It was the natural office for a man with his past. He had just turned thirty-one.

The rather tricky corner of the new Government's electoral record in respect to Chinese "slavery" in the Transvaal mines having been successfully negotiated, the young Minister turned his attention to his first important

legislative task, the exposition of "C.-B.'s" proposals for conferring self-government upon the recently conquered provinces.

It was at once a formidable undertaking and a great opportunity. Churchill welcomed it. Since his South African adventure he had always been convinced of the essential fineness of the Boer character, and even in the heat of battle had pleaded again and again for the utmost generosity towards a brave foe when the time should come for settlement. There must always, too, be lingering tenderness in any man's heart for the place and people that gave him a foothold on the ladder of fortune. Churchill was the last man to forget such things. As he rose to move the second reading of the South African Constitution Bill he must have re-lived in a flash the fight for the armoured train, the surrender to the burgher on the big horse (who turned out to have been Botha himself), the escape, the jolly days with the Cockyollybirds, the triumphant entry into Pretoria.

The Bill was received by the Conservatives with anger and suspicion. True, the Treaty of Peace had laid it down that "as soon as circumstances permit, representative institutions leading up to self-government will be introduced", but the string Tories harped upon was: Have the circumstances arisen? In the Upper House, Lord Milner and Lord Lansdowne talked in gloomy language about the probable outcome of what they termed precipitate haste. In the Lower House, the late Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, viewed with "alarm and distrust" "this most reckless development of a great colonial policy". Even the benign "C.-B." was so angered and distressed by the tone of the Opposition that on one occasion he said, replying to his predecessor in office: "In the minute left to me I will say only one thing, that never in the course of my parliamentary career have I listened to a more unworthy, provocative and mischievous . . ."

The Under-Secretary for the Colonies had no objection

to such an atmosphere, having regard to the size of the Government's majority. "We do not," he said in his closing speech, "ask honourable gentlemen opposite to share our responsibility. If by any chance our counsels of reconciliation should come to nothing, if our policy should end in mocking disaster, then the resulting evil would not be confined to South Africa. Our unfortunate experience would be trumpeted forth all over the world wherever despotism wanted a good argument for bayonets, wherever an arbitrary government wished to deny or curtail the liberties of imprisoned nationalities.

"But if, on the other hand, as we hope and profoundly believe, better days are in store for South Africa, if the long lane it has been travelling has reached its turning at last, if the near future should unfold to our eyes a tranquil, prosperous, consolidated Afrikander nation under the protecting ægis of the British Crown, then, I say, the good, as well as the evil, will not be confined to South Africa; then, I say, the cause of the poor and the weak all over the world will have been sustained, and everywhere small peoples will get more room to breathe, and everywhere great empires will be encouraged by our example to step forward—and it only needs a step—into the sunshine of a more gentle and a more generous age."

The same year (1906) Churchill was present, as the Kaiser's guest, at the German Army manoeuvres. He had never for a moment lost his interest in Service matters, nor had the Kaiser lost his interest in the South African War and the strangely un-German settlement that his young guest was so actively promoting. Winston found the trip so instructive and pleasant, and the German Army found his attentions so complimentary, that the experience was repeated three years later—only five years before the first Great War.

Then, in order to complete his knowledge of the African continent as Under-Secretary for the Colonies, came the jolly trip, with big-game shooting, which provided material

for *My African Journey*, one of the brightest, but least important, of his fifteen big volumes.

When Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman died suddenly in the spring of 1908, Mr. Asquith handed over his almost completed Budget to Mr. Lloyd George and asked Churchill to go to the Board of Trade, with, of course, a seat in the Cabinet. Mr. Walter Runciman (later, Lord Runciman) went to the Board of Education. So that the two men who had fought fiercely at Oldham, and whom the world was not to see the last of, were now colleagues in Cabinet council.

Under the old rules of the game, elevation to the Cabinet meant a bye-election. Churchill was quite ready: as he put it, he was still "young enough to enjoy a fight". This fight, however, was an exceptionally gruelling affair. As a renegade who was making good among the enemy, he would have been bound to draw heavy fire even if his manners had been those of a courtier; but he was at no pains to placate his old allies. On the contrary, he lost no opportunity of flaunting his change of party, emphasising his Radicalism, and confessing his faith in Lloyd George's rising star.

Hence the concentration of the whole weight of the Tory heavy artillery upon North-West Manchester, followed by wave upon wave of storm troops, and the hurrying up of all available reserves when fierce Liberal resistance was encountered. Breaking the unwritten rule that Cabinet Ministers do not take part in a bye-election, Mr. Lloyd George threw himself into the breach. As for Churchill himself, not even in Great Wars One and Two was his capacity for concentrated effort to be more severely tested. It was the General Election re-fought on a few square miles of territory, and for some weeks the country rocked with the fury of the fighting.

To add to the turmoil, the battle-cry "Votes for Women!" rang through the division from end to end. That strange device upon a banner not yet tattered had already been raised on a good many fields up and down the country,

especially in Manchester, the headquarters of the suffragettes. But the force of the attack upon Churchill was a novelty. Indeed from now onwards the set policy of the suffragettes was to regard him as the Devil in Trousers. His particular brand of masculine scorn enraged them beyond endurance, just as his particular brand of aristocratic scorn was to enrage the Socialists later on. "Go away, woman!" he would shout, in final exasperation, at some particularly pestilent enthusiast, and she would reply saucily, "It's no use your being cross".

As early as this 1908 bye-election he was professing a vague sympathy with the cause, while at the same time finding excuses for not supporting this or that franchise measure, an attitude that earned him the soubriquet of traitor. "Take that, you cur!" shouted a chivalrous young fellow on a railway station platform as he struck at Churchill with a dog-whip some years later. By and by it would be thought necessary to guard his little daughter against the possibility of her being kidnapped from her perambulator by friends of the movement; and Churchill would be roused to such a pitch of annoyance when suffragettes were chaining themselves to the railings of Downing Street that he would permit himself to quote somebody else's witticism: "A man might as well chain himself to the railings of St. Thomas's Hospital and say he won't leave until he has had a baby."

Right up to the outbreak of the first War and the declaration of a truce the Cabinet Minister whose life above all others the suffragettes tried to make unendurable was Winston Churchill, and the first concentration of their assault was at North-West Manchester. It was therefore a feather in their cap that he should have been narrowly beaten by Joynson-Hicks. He was only out of Parliament, however, for a few weeks. Not only was he a Minister, but, according to *The Times* of that date, "the greatest platform asset possessed by the Liberal Party". Dundee elected him, therefore, and he returned to his post as President of the Board of Trade before the summer was out.

Soon afterwards he married Miss Clementine Hozier, daughter of an Army colonel who had formerly been Secretary of Lloyds, and Lady Blanche Hozier. He thus became related by marriage to the Countess of Airlie, who was closely associated with his new Scottish constituency. There was a great political gathering for the wedding at St. Margaret's, Westminster, and Mr. Churchill's best man was Lord Hugh Cecil, the intimate of his "Hughligan" days.

In Parliament some of his most effective early speaking as a Member of the Cabinet brought him into intimate touch with Lloyd George, then engaged in putting through the Asquith Budget, which included provision for old age pensions. His advocacy was as spirited as anything that came from a particularly able Treasury Bench when he was replying to Lord Lansdowne's gloomy prognostication that non-contributory pensions for the aged would "weaken the moral fibre of the nation and diminish the self-respect of the people".

At the same time—and this was to be frequently thrown up at him in the future—he vigorously supported the Government's refusal to yield to the clamour for a huge programme of Dreadnought-building, demanded with the slogan, "We want eight and we won't wait". He considered the Prime Minister was right when he declared that there existed "no cause for anxiety, but ground for precaution".

Churchill's more strictly departmental duties about this time included putting through a Bill for bringing the docks of London up to date and the constitution of a Port of London Authority; setting up courts of industrial conciliation to deal with disputes in the engineering and cotton trades; and welcoming, on behalf of the Government, a Bill for the establishment of an eight-hour day in the mines. Later on he was responsible for the important measures establishing Labour Exchanges, and Trade Boards to regulate wages in sweated industries.

Economy in the fighting services—a loyal upraising still

of his father's tattered flag—and growing enthusiasm for expansion in the social services remained for some time the keynotes of Churchillian policy. In August, 1908, we find him rebuking Lord Cromer for what he considered alarmist warnings of coming danger from Germany, and early in the following year joining Lloyd George in strong criticism of Mr. McKenna's Naval Estimates, with their provision for six new Dreadnoughts and an increased expenditure of three million. In fact, for the time being there was a Lloyd George-Churchill pact that covered the whole ground of current politics. Winston was once again moving to the Left in the party of his adoption.

The "People's Budget" of that year cemented this alliance. The President of the Board of Trade became, on the battlefield of public debate, chief-of-staff to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Together they agreed upon a strategy which would concentrate attention not so much upon the details of the Budget as upon the opposition to the Budget of the House of Lords, represented as an effete aristocracy in league with an encroaching plutocracy. "The Lords versus the People" took the place of "Economy" upon the banner beneath which Churchill delivered some of his finest fighting speeches.

The pomposity of the dukes and the crudity of the new right were equally the butt of his biting, lively wit. As usual, he was coining phrases that would be used by other men—the sort of headline-phrases that have always marked him out as essentially the popular journalist in politics. He accused "the dukes" of defending "vulgar, joyless luxury", and assured them that "the tax-gatherer will ask in the future not only, 'What have you got?' but, 'How did you get it?'" "Pirates!" retorted the Duke of Rutland. Upon which Churchill recalled that an earlier duke of the same name had penned the immortal lines:

"Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning die,
But leave us still our old nobility!"

After the Lords had thrown out the Budget, and the country had rallied to the support of the Commons at a second General Election, Churchill (now Home Secretary and "President of the Budget League") was naturally confirmed in his uncompromising antagonism to the claims of the Second Chamber to a right of veto upon national finance. Nobody was more enthusiastic for the Parliament Bill, which put the Lords in chains. "We have," he declared in the Commons on May 15, 1910, "acted throughout upon notorious and intolerable provocation. We have acted upon grave injury and open challenge."

One of the brightest comedy-features of the parliamentary situation was supplied by the elaborately staged duels between "Winnie" and "F. E."—Churchill and his bosom friend, Mr. F. E. Smith, afterwards Lord Birkenhead.

"The Home Secretary," said Smith, "is beginning to play Macbeth to the Prime Minister's Thane of Cawdor. 'Keep the name of the Sovereign outside party politics,' says the Prime Minister. 'Give me the dagger,' says the Home Secretary. No more shameful speech has ever been made by a Member of the Commons than that in which the Home Secretary said, 'The time has come for the Crown and the Commons to act together to override the Lords'. Every one knows that the Home Secretary does not mean that the Crown and the House of Commons ought to act together. What he means is that the time has come for the Crown and the Liberal Party and the Irish Party to act together and go against the House of Lords. This is an insolent appropriation of the name of the Sovereign to purely party purposes."

Prior to 1910 it might have been thought impossible for a politician to be more detested than was Winston Churchill by the Conservative Party during those five years. But the depths had not yet been plumbed. After the hot battles of 1909-11 not only did the temperature rise still further on public occasions, but in private and semi-private every kind of slander against his habits and personal

character was in circulation. He was able to nail one or two lies to the counter—such as that he “ran away from the Boers and broke his parole”; but the slanders were symptomatic: he was the best-hated man in the country.

The attitude of a good many people at this time could have been fairly expressed in the insulting terms employed by counsel for the defence twelve years later at the hearing of the libel action brought by the Crown against Lord Alfred Douglas: “Do not let Mr. Churchill dominate you by the charm of his personality and manners. He is nothing, stripped of the great kudos of ‘the right honourable’, and such things. He is a professional politician, and a professional politician has been defined as a man with a hide like a rhinoceros, the skin of a chameleon, a short memory and the cheek of the Devil.”

Churchill enjoyed it all, as he had enjoyed Omdurman and the gurgling vulture on the veldt. Battle was his element.

A daring pilot in extremity;
Pleased with the danger when the waves ran high,
He sought the storms. . . .

Nor can one escape the suspicion that, as a background, lay a schoolboy's delight in paying back the Party that had broken his father. Apart from all considerations of the welfare of the State, it was a great lark to make this stuffy old crowd sit up.

Nevertheless, Churchill did not neglect his Departmental duties in order to find time to annoy the Opposition. Few Ministers have been more devoted students of their own affairs. His capacity for mastering an indigestible mass of correspondence and departmental minutes was, by testimony of the Civil Service, altogether out of the common. Indeed, the rigour of his administration was none too popular at the Home Office, or Scotland Yard, for he “ran his own show” with a vengeance. Secretarial traditions and the niceties of service etiquette were little to him.

In Parliament he displayed special interest in prison reform, and introduced regulations which would diminish the number of those who were imprisoned in default of the payment of a fine. His plans for prison lectures and concerts were ridiculed, but adopted. Through all this he had in his thoughts his own brief experience of prison in South Africa, with its awful sense of the cage. He had never forgotten that dreadful impotence and boredom. Ever since, the petition in the Litany for "prisoners and captives" he had made peculiarly his own.

More, perhaps, than with most men, these shafts of light from a glowing past illuminated his path and were helping to make his life a unity. Yet the light was not sufficient to save him from impulsive action which occasionally gave enemies the chance to make him look ridiculous. The incident of the "Dartmoor Shepherd" was one of these occasions. Misled by the word "Sacrilege" in Home Office reports, he ordered the release from Dartmoor of an aged Welsh shepherd who had been sentenced to a long term for thefts from offertory boxes, and found him a situation at Wrexham. The old fellow ran away and was caught stealing again: he had, in fact, been an incorrigible thief for many years. The shepherd's pitiful case having been much advertised by prison reformers, and humanitarians in general, his backsliding was correspondingly magnified by critics. The whole affair became a national joke, with Winston the chief butt of the wits, and Lloyd George a good second.

An incident such as that—doing credit to his heart if not to his head—probably did Churchill more good than harm, seeing that it was his heart which was generally suspect. But his record at the Home Office in regard to labour troubles was less innocuous. At the end of 1910, and in the summer of 1911, he greatly angered trade unionists by organising a flying squad of Metropolitan police to help the local constabulary in disturbed mining areas; and when there was a brief railway strike in the

August of the latter year they were still more furious at his use of soldiers to take the place of railwaymen.

Lord Robert Cecil (later, Lord Cecil), a brother of Churchill's old political intimate, Lord Hugh Cecil, turned upon him savagely, in unexpected alliance with the trade unionists, alleging that there could be no better example of the growth of bureaucracy. In recent times, said he, no Minister had, in so few months, committed a greater series of outrages on liberty and justice.

There is a story, too, of John Burns finding him poring over a set of maps one day when there was vague talk of a national strike, and of Winston asking him cheerily, "Now what do you think of my military arrangements, John?" "I think," retorted "Honcst John", as he marched out, "that you're mistaking a coffee-stall row for the social revolution."

II. GUNS IN SIDNEY-STREET

Winston Churchill had taken his seat as a new Member of the House of Commons on the first day of the first Parliament of King Edward's reign. He was Home Secretary when the King died ten years later. He had challenged, and materially helped to defeat, the Protectionist campaign of Joseph Chamberlain. He had been the active instrument in the creation of a united self-governing South Africa. He, a Tory by tradition and upbringing, had helped to place on the Statute Book some useful pieces of Liberal legislation. He had become a great national figure at the age of thirty-six, and was clearly in the running for the premiership.

But he had not yet mastered—as he was almost to succeed in mastering later—the impediment in his speech which had been a boyish trouble. To somebody meeting him in London during the Eton-and-Harrow match he had explained that he had not come up to see the match, but to consult a specialist about his lisp and stammer, "because, you see, although it won't matter at all in the Army, it'll

be a great nuisance when I get into Parliament". It will be remembered also that, the specialist having evidently failed to find a cure, the Boers had offered £25 for a young Englishman, dead or alive, who "talks through his nose and cannot pronounce the letter S properly".

The fact that his speech was still, in the year 1910, curiously distinctive is proved to me by a vivid personal memory of the night King Edward died, for it was Churchill himself who, without knowing it, gave me the news over the telephone. Owing to an astonishing series of coincidences I found myself, ten minutes after the King had passed away, listening, in a public telephone-box near Buckingham Palace, to the Home Secretary discussing the event with a high Palace official. The eavesdropping was quite unpremeditated; the idiosyncrasy of speech absolute confirmation of authenticity. It gave me the news fully ten minutes before any other journalist, and left me with a lifelong impression of Churchill's voice, which I was to hear in later years at the opening of five Budgets.

Eight months later I again encountered the Home Secretary under circumstances strangely contrasting, yet equally unforgettable,—at the "siege" of Sidney-street, on January 3, 1911. It has been said that "you have the whole of Churchill in the Sidney-street affair", and I am not inclined to dispute it. Though I would add, "and you also have in the Sidney-street affair the essence of the public's reaction to Churchill". In quite extraordinary completeness there were assembled at Sidney-street all the circumstances typical of a "Winston show", all the little touches of the bizarre that make a journalist-politician's holiday, all the inescapable advertisement, all the foundations for a half-true, half-libellous legend. As this was the first of "Winston's shows" of which I was a spectator, I therefore propose to tell the story in some detail.

It starts in the middle of the previous month—on 16th December, 1910—when a Mr. Isenstein, who kept a fancy-goods shop in Houndsditch, the Jewish business quarter

on the City side of Whitechapel, heard mysterious noise at the rear of his premises. He told the police, who investigated. What was happening was that burglars were trying to break through the rear wall not of Mr. Isenstein's establishment, but of Mr. Harris's next door, Mr. Harris being a jeweller who every night locked £30,000 worth of goods in his safe.

When the police interfered with these operations the burglars replied with Mauser pistol fire. There was a running fight in the dark and narrow streets. Three police sergeants were shot dead, and several other members of the Force wounded, the police having only their truncheons to pit against the burglars' firearms.

The affair created an immense sensation; it was almost the first instance of the employment of savage "foreign" methods in the field of British crime, hitherto conducted with reasonable regard for the humanities. There was an unexampled mobilisation of the Police Force for the combing of the East End, with a hue-and-cry for one man in particular—"Peter the Painter". Peter Straume was a sign-writer, born at Riga, in Finland, who had for some years been the leading figure in a small colony of Letts in Whitechapel. He called himself an Anarchist, and the police had been keeping an eye on him. They were confident he was leader of the gunmen.

Public indignation was so deeply stirred that the three murdered policemen (being of the City force) were given a funeral in St. Paul's Cathedral, while the Metropolitan and City forces swore a common oath that the murderers should be brought to the gallows, no matter how many years the hunt might take. Ten days after the shooting they made a sensational discovery. Raiding Mr. Moroutzeff's house in Gold-street, a few turnings from Sidney-street, Stepney (a mile or so to the east of Houndsditch), they found an automatic pistol and 600 cartridges, 150 Mauser bullets, a dagger, bottles of nitric acid, nitro-glycerine and other dangerous chemicals, and a book on the manufacture

of explosives. In the newspapers the place was naturally described as "an anarchist arsenal".

The curtain rose upon the third act very early in the morning of January 3rd, 1911, at 100 Sidney-street. Some men whom the police were looking for had been run to earth in the rooms of a Russian seamstress. Fifty police had closed in upon the house, fifteen armed with revolvers and four with rifles fitted with Morris small-calibre tubes. It was a bitter winter's night, with light snow on the ground.

There was dead silence when the police knocked and got no answer. By 4 a.m. strong reinforcements had arrived—100 City men and 100 Metropolitan. As a summons to surrender, the police threw stones at the windows of No. 100. The response was a salvo of shots from windows on the second floor. A sergeant was hit in the chest, but not badly hurt, and an inspector found that a hole had been punched in his cap.

As soon as I reached Fleet-street that morning I was ordered to Sidney-street, and found the whole region congested with police, stiffened with a sprinkling of soldiers. Now and again a pistol shot, fired, one would say, more in general defiance than with deliberate aim, would come from an attic window of No. 100, every pane of glass in which had by this time been smashed by the besiegers. The police were 750 strong. Seventeen men, with two non-commissioned officers, of the Scots Guards, and a Maxim gun had also been fetched from the Tower. Some of the soldiers were sniping from a brewery; others were lying in the street on newspaper bill-boards (to protect them from the bitter slush), looking very much as though they were trying to score bulls at Bisley.

This was the position when, soon after midday, I saw Mr. Churchill arrive in a car from Whitehall. He was wearing a silk hat and a fur-lined overcoat with astrachan collar—altogether an imposing figure in the exceedingly drab surroundings. His "staff" consisted of Sir Melville Macnaghten, Chief of the C.I.D.; Sir J. W. Nott-Bower,

Commissioner of the City Police; and Superintendent Quinn, head of the political section at Scotland Yard. By anybody who had been present at manœuvres, and had a knowledge of the Home Secretary's career, the parallel with the arrival at the scene of military operations of, say, a brigadier could hardly be missed; and the Press did not miss it. Here was a priceless piece of characteristic personal drama—just the sort of thing that Churchill himself, as a first-class reporter, would have developed brilliantly—to add tone to the otherwise rather garish colours of what looked likely to be the most sensational London crime story of the decade.

Churchill was not to blame for the papers going nap on it. His nature, then as always, was to make a front-page story out of the simplest materials, and these materials were the sort for which front pages were created. A different Home Secretary who wished to see what was happening might have made a different story, for he might have slipped quietly down to Stepney and almost escaped notice. Now Churchill cannot be ignored. He is equally conspicuous among the guns of Sidney-street as on the benches of the House of Commons, or in the chatter of the clubs; or, for the matter of that, among the vultures of the veldt, or Ministers in Cabinet Council assembled. It is not so much that he consciously seeks the limelight as that the limelight follows him.

So upon this occasion I watched him moving restlessly hither and thither among the rather nervous and distraught police, a professional soldier among civilians, talking, questioning, advising. After all, he was doing no more—indeed a great deal less—than he had done with conspicuous success as a war correspondent with the wrecked armoured-train at Chieveley. Peeping round corners, he exposed himself with the Scots Guards to the random fire of the besieged burglars, or consulted with his "staff" in tones of the utmost gravity.

There is no evidence, however, that he took command of the situation, or indeed issued a single order. He agreed

that it might be an excellent thing to have in reserve a couple of field guns from the Royal Horse Artillery depot at St. John's Wood, and that a party of Royal Engineers from Chatham might be useful if mining operations had to be undertaken against the citadel. He even suggested that casualties might be avoided if steel plates were brought from Woolwich to form portable cover for the military sharpshooters—an early version of one of his ideas in the Great War. But in all this his official correctitude was unimpeachable. His intense activity, his strong cerebration under stimulus, were his only faults, and those he could not help. It must also be remembered that the strength of the garrison at No. 100 was still unknown.

Soon after one o'clock wisps of smoke began to ooze through the broken windows. By half past it was clear that the attic, from which most of the firing had come, was well alight, and that the flames were beginning to creep lower. The Fire Brigade arrived and gallantly proposed to go into action forthwith. The police forbade them to do so, and the Home Secretary agreed with this course—a point upon which he had to meet hot criticism later. It seems plain, however, that the initiative was not his, and there would have been far stronger ground for criticism if he had countermanded the police instructions.

Very soon the firing from No. 100 ceased. The house was alight from top to bottom. After ten minutes of silence, a police inspector—with the Home Secretary, and a guardsman armed with a double-barrelled sporting gun, in close attendance—marched up to the front door and kicked it down. He shouted an order to surrender. There was no reply.

The fire engines were then brought up and quickly got to work. In the ruins two charred bodies were found. They were those of Fritz Svaars and Jacob Vogel—the whole garrison. No trace was found of Peter Straume, the "Painter", nor has there been any authentic news of him to this day.

On the besiegers' side, a guardsman was hit in the leg, a police sergeant in the chest, and three civilians were slightly wounded; while Superintendent Quinn, one of the officers in close attendance upon the Home Secretary, was struck, but not badly hurt, by a spent bullet. The only person sent to prison over the affair, or the Houndsditch murders, was a twenty-three-year-old cigarette-maker named Nina Vassileve.

These are the facts around which one of the most remarkable of the Churchill legends has been spun. They had at least one useful result—the issue of up-to-date “automatics” to the police force for dangerous duty, and they also did more than any other single incident to make the world conscious of a certain Churchillian aura which is part of the man. Let us call that the penalty of possessing a legendary personality.

III. READY, AYE, READY!

When the German gunboat *Panther* was despatched in the month of July, 1911, to Agadir, on the Atlantic seaboard of Morocco, the wheel of fortune swung Winston Churchill, silently and secretly, towards the zenith. His equipment was complete; his position relative to other men in English public life ideal; his spirit high. It seemed to be precisely the sort of situation for which Destiny had been preparing him, and he was not blind to the fact.

The despatch of the *Panther* by the Kaiser's advisers was a protest—amounting to a threat of war—against the establishment by France of a protectorate over the African province of Morocco, in alleged contravention of an agreement made a couple of years earlier between the two countries. Germany was determined to gain a foothold in the Mediterranean; France and her friends, being suspicious of Germany's ultimate intentions, were determined to shut her out. The expression of this country's determination to lend France her full support was assigned to (of

all men, but that was the sting of the choice) the ex-pro-Boer Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George. His historic speech at the London Mansion House, warning Germany of the consequences if the *Panther* were not recalled, was the result.

It is highly questionable whether Lloyd George really believed at that time that there was any imminent danger of an outbreak of war. He lent the powerful influence of his name to a diplomatic demonstration in the belief that it was just as well to take time by the forelock, and that Germany would be glad enough of an excuse to withdraw from this risky adventure.

With his foremost Radical ally, Churchill, it was different. Churchill was from the first convinced that something much more deep-seated and dangerous than the reasonable desire of a vigorous nation to secure "a place in the sun" lay behind the Agadir incident. He thought war with Germany not only possible, but probable, in the near future. Putting aside, as irrelevant to the immediate problem, his record during the past few years as a determined opponent of British naval expansion, putting aside also many of the Home Office problems in which he had recently been immersed, he turned to the concentrated study of the problem of preparedness. It was a problem that made a unique appeal to his military genius. He deliberately forgot about everything else.

From Sir Edward Grey, Churchill learnt for the first time the details of the Franco-British pact against German aggression. At the same time he was admitted to membership of the "Inner Cabinet", whose other members were the Prime Minister (Asquith), the Foreign Secretary (Grey), the Secretary for War (Haldane), and the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Lloyd George) but not, be it noted, the First Lord of the Admiralty (McKenna).

Parliament was "up", so the Inner Cabinet was untroubled by questions in the House. It settled down to the grave consideration of national defence in all its aspects,

Churchill's special contribution being a "Memorandum on the Military Aspects of the Continental Problem"—the first of a long series of memoranda, signed "W.S.C.", on kindred aspects of the same general question which were to be enjoyed, or ridiculed, or weightily considered, by Cabinet Councils or at General Headquarters in the course of the next six or seven years. In this particular example he applied his constructive imagination to a problematical European war with notable effect, and results that elicited sneers from the War Office. Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the General Staff, alluded to it as "this silly memo". The general purport was that the War Staff of the British Army was much too optimistic about the resisting power of the French and the speedy exercise of Russian pressure, and that its time-table was therefore badly out of joint. Churchill timed the main counterstroke for the fortieth day. As a matter of fact, the Battle of the Marne opened on the forty-second day after the declaration of war. Not a bad shot for an amateur!

He spent the holiday weeks of the summer of 1911 almost in the physical presence of the coming war. The idea of the war was an obsession, a hundred times more intense because he was convinced of the fearful responsibility imposed upon him by this inner knowledge. He began to see himself again as the Man of Destiny. Could that destiny be denied? He thought not, if . . .

His mind harked back to that day in the House of Commons, ten years earlier, when, as a very callow parliamentarian, he had turned upon his indignant colleagues on the Conservative benches to tell them that "a European war cannot be anything but a cruel, heart-rending struggle . . . the bitter fruits of victory . . . the whole manhood of the nation . . . Democracy is more vindictive than Cabinets . . . the wars of Peoples will be more terrible than those of Kings".

He tells¹ how, one hot August day, he climbed a hilltop

¹ W. S. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, Vol. I, Thornton Butterworth.

and, looking out across the peaceful beauty that is England, fell into a brown study, with the words of Housman's "Shropshire Lad" running in his head as a sort of refrain to his musings:

"On the idle hills of summer,
Sleepy with the flow of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer
Drumming like a noise in dreams . . .
Dear to friends and food for powder,
Soldiers marching, all to die."

Day and night he lived in the haunting presence of a feared surprise. Now the drum beats to the tune of, "Is England ready? Is England ready?" and again, "I don't know, I don't know."

He had worked himself up into a strange state of nervous dread and exaltation, the outcome of half-knowledge and no power, when the Prime Minister invited him to join him on a holiday in Scotland. Asquith's thinking had been following much the same lines, but if he, too, heard the beating of the drum, it was to a much more sober accompaniment. He had been pondering upon the European situation, the implications of the *entente cordiale*, the chances of entanglement in the net of continental rivalries.

He was not the man to shrink from action, but his thoughts moved slowly. And his thoughts had led him slowly to the conclusion that the military junta in Germany had got the whip-hand behind the scenes, and were secretly seeking an early opportunity of war with France. To disable England before she could come to France's aid, even to strike at England before France was struck, might be a possible development of German Weltpolitik. Therefore the Prime Minister asked the Home Secretary to run up to Scotland. This was in October, 1911.

Again one must fall back for some of the dramatic touches upon *The World Crisis*. Churchill went North, with the

drum still beating in his brain—Germany's power, Germany's ambition, Germany's conscript army, Germany's navy, Germany's navy, Germany's navy! There was a Bible in his bedroom. As he was undressing slowly he opened it and read the first words his eye lighted on:

"A people great and tall. . . . Who can stand before the children of Anak? . . . as a consuming fire. He shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out and destroy them quickly. . . . Not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thy heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee."

How Lord Fisher, the old salt, with his profound faith in Bible omens and dry powder, enjoyed that story when he and Churchill came to be hand-in-glove at the Admiralty! "Do try to remember," he exclaimed, "that we are the lost Ten Tribes of Israel! We are bound to win. You are very wrong to worry and excite yourself."

Whether Asquith was told the story next morning is not recorded, but he was evidently impressed by Churchill's outlook and arguments, which must have been strengthened by the testimony of Holy Writ. He confided in him. There was disagreement, it appeared, between the Admiralty and the War Office in regard to strategy upon the outbreak of war. Haldane, who had been busy reorganising the land forces, insisted upon co-ordination between the sister arms, with a view to the rapid despatch of an expeditionary force to the Continent of Europe. McKenna (who, it will be remembered, was not a member of the Inner Cabinet) and his admirals resisted. Tension had reached the point of crisis. Haldane was threatening to resign.

The general outline of the position was, of course, already known to the Home Secretary, but the outline was now filled in. He had ample food for thought on his Scottish

walks. The trend of events all pointed in one direction—a Service appointment in the Cabinet. Would it be the War Office, or would it be the Admiralty? As Home Secretary he had already done what little was permitted within the administrative limitations of his office. He had armed the police in charge of cordite stores, and arranged for their reinforcement with troops. He had instructed the Post Office to deal appropriately with the suspected correspondence of aliens. He had laid his plans for alien internment and supervision, and the hundred-and-one things the Home Office would have to do on The Day; but the field of preparation was limited. For many weeks the whole engine-power of that formidable and capacious brain, stimulated by a lively imagination, had been directed to the solution of much more definitely military problems. Was he now to be given power to act?

The answer came during a day spent upon the shores of the Firth of Forth. Asquith asked him, in his quiet, straightforward way, whether he would be willing to exchange offices with McKenna. Churchill said three fateful words: "Indeed I would." They settled a great deal. Possibly they may have even settled what should happen upon these very waters of the Firth of Forth seven years later, when, from the deck of H.M.S. *Royal Oak* (now sunk), I was myself a witness of the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet.

It appears that Asquith's original intention was to give Churchill the War Office, and transfer Haldane to the Admiralty. Possibly he was influenced in his final decision by his talks with Churchill on the Scottish holiday; but in any case the latter was delighted. He was still more delighted when he heard the thorough-going terms of his commission: "To put the Fleet into a state of instant and constant readiness for war in case we are attacked by Germany." This was indeed the task for which he felt, at that time, that life had been preparing him. At the War Office he would merely have been taking over from another

man a beautifully designed machine for the swift assembly and despatch of an expeditionary force, but at the Admiralty there was creative work to be done. Work that would call for imagination. Work that would call for fighting.

He tumbled on air, and for a day his head was in the clouds. Then he flung the entire resources of his nature into the task ahead. From henceforth he cultivated a sense of ever-pressing danger. *Dulce periculum est*—danger is sweet. To many a man the thrill of personal danger is the greatest gift life has to offer, but to enjoy that continuing thrill as administrative chief of a great nation, unknowingly in direst peril, is given to few. Few, indeed, could carry the weight and still enjoy the thrill. To do so calls for prodigious self-confidence, prodigious egotism, prodigious power of work. Churchill was one of those men. Asquith chose him for that reason.

His first step was to get in touch with Fisher, who had retired from the office of First Sea Lord twelve months earlier. He had first met John Arbuthnot Fisher when on holiday at Biarritz in 1907. They had, as it were, fallen in love. Neither of them had ever grown up: both were big, passionate children, pugnacious and terrifically over-engined. Of course they would quarrel savagely: of course they would make it up. There are few things quite so romantic, so pregnant with great consequences, so absurd, in the history of war-comradeship as the relations between Winston Churchill and Jackie Fisher.

At Biarritz in 1907 they had talked far into the night—the sea dog of seventy and the politician of three-and-thirty—about Nelson and the Bible and sea power and the great men of old. They had found they understood one another, spoke the same language, had the same attitude towards life. Fisher's was the old wine and Churchill's the new, but they were both grown on the same volcanic soil—Ætna wines, hot on the palate. The talks had been resumed after the Agadir incident. Fisher had found an apt pupil, not only for his strategical, but also for his

tactical, notions. Churchill was fully primed when Asquith broached the subject in Scotland.

The task upon which they now began to collaborate—Churchill officially installed at the Admiralty and Fisher as his unofficial adviser—was nothing short of the creation in the Navy of a new outlook upon war through the permeation of the Service with the new ideas of a new Naval War Staff. The fighting of the future was to be upon the high seas, the "blue water". The enemy was not to be bottled up in his home harbours, but to be tempted out to destruction, wrought by superior speed and heavier guns. "Ruthless, relentless, remorseless" was to be the motto, and "speed is armour" the recipe for carrying it through. The Churchill-Fisher combination reckoned that about fifteen years might suffice to complete the change under peace conditions, without unduly alarming the nation and the world, and that not more than a tenth of that time could be looked for.

Within a very few months after Churchill's appointment surprising things began to happen at the Admiralty. Earthquake succeeded earthquake. Admirals were scrapped ruthlessly. In the House of Commons Lord Charles Beresford, acting as spokesman of the older school, foamed at the mouth daily. "The honourable and gallant member," retorted the First Lord impudently, "can best be described as one of those orators who before they get up do not know what they are going to say, when they are speaking do not know what they are saying, and when they have sat down do not know what they have said." This did not sound conciliatory. Asquith listened with tight-lipped acquiescence, knowing the job Winston had been set to do and that he would do it in his own way.

Always in the background there was Fisher, addressing his letters to "My beloved Winston", and signing them "Yours to a cinder", or "Yours till Hell freezes", or "Yours till charcoal sprouts". For the first time automatic promotion by seniority ceased to operate, and young

officers found themselves in positions of trust and authority. Sir Arthur ("Tug") Wilson resigned as First Sea Lord; so did Sir Francis Bridgeman. Prince Louis of Battenberg was given the appointment, and proved amenable to the new régime. Beatty, who was to command the battle-cruisers at Jutland (and had watched the charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman from a gunboat on the Nile), was Churchill's Naval Secretary. Jellicoe, who had been "nursed" by Fisher for years, became second-in-command of the Fleet in home waters, in readiness.

During the summer and autumn of 1911 Churchill spent most of his time afloat in the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress*. He was still filled with an acute sense of the menace of approaching war, though the country went happily about its business. The yacht was at once his office and his home, enabling him to see with his own eyes the entire range of the Navy's activities.

Early in the New Year he went off to Malta, with the Prime Minister, there to discuss with him and Lord Kitchener plans for the concentration of the nation's defence forces. The reconciliation with Kitchener—if reconciliation were needed, for the difference of opinion about the respect due to the Mahdi's tomb had been a public rather than a personal affair—was complete, and the way was thus still further paved for the only thing that seemed to matter at the moment—an efficient and harmonious resistance on the approaching war front.

The close of 1911 had seen, by the by, the creation of the Naval War Staff to whose constitution Churchill had been devoting so much thought. In the First Lord's words, it was "designed to be a brain far more comprehensive than that of any single man".

It was in the midst of these preoccupations that the spectre of Irish trouble began to move hither and thither, sometimes as no more than a disturbing transparency, sometimes as a most solid menace, across the landscape of politics. During 1911 it had appeared with embarrassing

frequency, and now, with the imminent introduction of a new Home Rule Bill, it became a permanent feature of the view.

In the opinion of the public Churchill was a much more important person as one of the chief sponsors of Home Rule than he was as a mere First Lord of the Admiralty, and the announcement that he, the son of the man who had said that "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right", meant to address in the Ulster Hall (of all places in the world) a Home Rule meeting produced a newspaper outcry. It was regarded as "just like Winston", but very few people realised at the time the full significance of that phrase.

On February 16th the Ulster Unionist Council threatened to use force, if necessary, to prevent the desecration of the hall. All other public halls were refused, but Churchill insisted upon keeping the engagement: he spoke in a tent on the Nationalist football ground, and nothing happened. But the serious aspect of the Irish spectre lay not in the domestic consequences of incidents of this sort but in the international consequences of a widely advertised state of disunion. Sir Edward Carson was announcing himself a rebel, and daring the Government to prosecute him.

Considerations such as these were very much in the First Lord's thoughts when, on his way home from Belfast, he called at Glasgow to inspect some new shipbuilding works on the Clyde. There he read a speech by the Kaiser announcing a large increase in Germany's shipbuilding programme. It was what he had been fearing. He replied at once, without waiting to get back to London, in a speech declaring that "for us a great fleet is a necessity, for Germany a luxury. It is existence for us; it is expansion for them."

Seldom has any speech created such a storm of what may be termed marshalled and disciplined protest. The German Press described the British First Lord's assertions as outrageous, preposterous, insolent. In particular, the use of the word "luxury" was branded as a deliberate insult.

A luxury-fleet—a *luxus Flotte*—unthinkable impudence! The First Lord's Speech, coming as it did at a moment when Haldane, the Secretary for War, was in Berlin making tactful inquiries about the meaning of Germany's preparations, was much criticised too at home, but Haldane declared later that it helped rather than hindered.

The temperature rose steadily on the other side of the North Sea. In Great Britain there was frank perturbation. Churchill's speech was regretted as having given occasion for a newspaper outburst that could have only one meaning—the desire of certain people behind the scenes in Germany to inflame public passion; and the First Lord accordingly did what he could, a few weeks later, to explain to the world what precisely was the attitude of the British Government. "We should," he said, "be the first Power to welcome any retardation or slackening of naval rivalry. We should meet any such slackening not merely by words but by deeds."

The time had now come for the introduction of Churchill's first Naval Estimates. They showed no great increase in total expenditure, but announced the reorganisation of the Navy in four Fleets, which would have the effect of a concentration in the North Sea. At the same time Fisher was recalled from nominal retirement to be Chairman of the Royal Commission on Oil Fuel. Oil, the new life-blood of the Navy, was his dominating passion at the time. More and more oil must be made available, and the main source of supply must be under the control of the Government.

One more effort was to be made, however, to reach an understanding with Germany. "Suppose," said Churchill, "we were both to take a naval holiday in 1913, and introduce a blank page into the book of misunderstanding!" Twenty-four hours of anxious waiting followed. No word of response came from Berlin. Tirpitz wanted no holiday.

Churchill settled down to his job again—the job of "putting the Fleet into a state of instant and constant

readiness for war in case we are attacked by Germany". Twice he had tried to come to terms; there should be no third chance. Fisher was not sorry. He had always held that "the one thing is to keep foreign admirals running after you; it's *hell* for them!" The essence of success was surprise; to get ahead so far that the rest would never be able to catch up with you in time. He had invented the Dreadnought, and Germany was catching up. By what fresh trick could he outdistance her? Guns . . . much bigger guns . . . that was the idea! To be sure, he was only the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Oil Fuel; but the First Lord was his friend . . . the First Lord had a mind made like his own, he loved taking big risks, he loved battle.

It was thus that, on the morrow of his plea for a naval holiday, Churchill came to press forward the secret manufacture at utmost speed of 15-inch guns (ordered some time earlier) for his five new Dreadnoughts, in place of the 13.5 inch guns which were supposed to constitute their main armament. They came to be known in the service as the "hush-and-push" guns. They turned the Dreadnoughts into super-Dreadnoughts, the new gun throwing a shell weighing nearly a ton for twelve miles. Said Fisher to Churchill: "What was it that enabled Jack Johnson to knock out his opponents? It was the Big Punch." Said Churchill to the House of Commons when, in March, 1914, the matter at last came up for discussion: "We shall have ten ships armed with this weapon by the time any other naval Power has two. . . . We acted without ever making a trial gun. We trusted entirely to British naval science in marine artillery."

And again: "If you want to make a true picture in your mind of a battle between great ironclad ships you must not think of it as if it were between two men in armour striking at each other with heavy swords. It is more like a battle between two egg-shells striking at each other with hammers. . . . The importance of hitting first, of hitting

hardest, and of keeping on hitting really needs no further proof."

Whether the Battle of Jutland was to be a proof of the all-sufficiency of the Fisher theories, as embodied in practice by Churchill, is a matter for expert discussion: the daring of the First Lord's decision to gamble on the success of his "hush-and-push" guns cannot, at any rate, be disputed. If they had shattered the ships into which they were built his would have been the whole blame, his political career would have been wrecked beyond salvage, and the position of his country upon the outbreak of war might have been irremediably jeopardised. But it was not to be. This time again the gamble came off. This time again he was "thrust to the brink and then withdrawn"—could it be by a Destiny that was luring him on to throw the dice for yet higher stakes? Foolish to speculate, for "life is a whole and luck is a whole, and no part of them can be separated from the rest".

The year 1913 brought no rest. All the forces of the nation had, in Churchill's view, to be assembled in readiness for a supreme effort in the following twelve months. Fisher's policy of "speed is armour" required the building of a fast division of battleships—*Queen Elizabeth*, *Warspite*, *Valiant*, *Barham*, *Malaya*, all steaming 25 knots and carrying 15-inch guns—and a complete change-over from coal to oil, giving vastly greater sea-keeping power. The arrangement for Government control of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was the outcome of the second of these demands, Fisher being Chairman of the Oil-Fuel Commission.

It was in the spring of this year that Churchill handed to what was known as the "Invasion Committee" of the Cabinet a series of five short memoranda, or notes. They are described by Churchill himself as "imaginative exercises couched in a half-serious vein, but designed to disturb complacency". They included "The Time-table of a Nightmare" and "A Bolt from the Grey". What the Invasion Committee said about this bright reading has

not been recorded in detail, but it may be presumed that in the strict privacy of the smoking room the "complacency" of certain members was not exhibited in their language.

The memoranda were the prelude to the largest Naval Estimates in the world's history, presented to the House of Commons in March, 1914. They were for £51,500,000 (pre-War value of the £), being £2,750,000 more than the previous year, and £21,500,000 more than the figure in the first year of King George's reign. There was a terrible hubbub on the Liberal party's Left Wing, and Churchill's record as the leading critic of the comparatively pacific McKenna Estimates was profusely quoted. "The responsibilities," he replied, "which rest upon the Admiralty come home with a brutal reality. . . . Unless our naval strength were solidly, amply, unswervingly maintained the Government could not feel that they were doing their duty by the country".

As the year wore on, conflict in Ireland strengthened the impression upon the continent of Europe that Britain was out of action for the time being. The eyes of the whole country were bent upon Ulster, now in open rebellion against the authority of the Westminster Parliament, which was itself almost equally divided upon the Home Rule issue. To add to the irony of the situation, it was the First Lord of the Admiralty who had himself moved the second reading of the Home Rule Bill. Churchill was acutely aware how dangerous was the impression created abroad by the uproar in Ireland, but he was equally aware that it was based upon an illusion. He was therefore able to face the future cheerfully, with the Navy ready and Haldane's plans at the War Office well laid.

Some months earlier it had been decided that there should be no naval manœuvres in 1914, not for any machiavellian reason of policy but simply because so much money was being spent upon the Fleet in other directions. "Fleet exercise" such as later have taken the

place of elaborate mimic warfare were to do duty on the technical side, while on the spectacular side there was to be a grand review by the King at Spithead.

There can have been few more remarkable instances in history of the sort of coincidence which influences world-events than the fact that the review was fixed for July 18th, the very moment at which the Austrian ultimatum was being prepared. The Foreign Office was on tenter-hooks. The newspapers were asked not to describe the review in detail, but to content themselves with giving a general impression of the power of the Fleet and the spirit of the officers and men. I went down to Spithead for two days and did my best to fulfil these curious instructions, with a very vague notion of their precise implication. It was an amazing affair, this hush-hush review. Steaming at 15 knots, it took six hours for the 200 ships to pass the saluting point. There were 70,000 officers and men on board. On the Sunday night the illuminations were marvellous. The Admiralty had not at any rate the least objection to the illuminations being described, which was a relief.

The Fleet did not disperse. By order of the First Sea Lord, Prince Louis of Battenberg (afterwards Lord Milford Haven), it continued in a state of assembly, or suspended animation, waiting at the various home ports.

Trouble was working up to a climax in Ireland, and on the Tuesday I crossed to Dublin, with a watching brief. On the Thursday of that week, at the end of a Cabinet meeting concerned almost entirely with the Irish crisis, Sir Edward Grey quietly read aloud the terms of Austria's ultimatum to Servia. Churchill realised in a flash that *Der Tag* had come.

Three days later—on Sunday, July 26th—1,000 rifles were "run" by Erskine Childers and his wife from Antwerp to Howth, near Dublin, as a counter-move to the gun-running from Hamburg to Larne, near Belfast, several weeks earlier by Carson's volunteers. I was present when the King's Scottish Borderers fired upon a following

mob in Bachelor's Walk, on the quays of the Liffey. There was every appearance of Ireland being upon the brink of terrible events.

Next day the Fleet was sent north to prevent the possibility of it being bottled up. Jellicoe, who was shortly to take over the supreme command, sailed for Scapa Flow under sealed orders. "Stand-by" (or precautionary period) telegrams went out on the Wednesday. On the Saturday Churchill, upon his own responsibility and against the express decision of the Cabinet, ordered the mobilisation of the Naval Reserve.

At 11 p.m. (midnight, by German time) on the following Tuesday, August 4th, a General Order was issued to the British Navy: "Commence hostilities at once against Germany". By that time I was on the Continent. Churchill's three years of preparation were ended. "There is one thing," his old opponent, Kitchener, was to say later in the darkest hour of his fortunes, "there is one thing they cannot take from you: the Fleet was ready."

V

WAR COUNSELLOR

I. THE ANTWERP ADVENTURE

CHURCHILL HAD MADE it his business to be completely convinced that war was coming. It was that conviction which had made possible the intensive effort of the preceding three years. The only point in doubt was the exact date of The Day; and upon that point he had had the assurance of Fisher that The Day would come somewhere about the year 1914 when the deepening of the Kiel Canal had been completed. Everything, therefore, even down to the timetable, appeared to be working according to plan. World War One was a matter of course.

Also, as a matter of course, the Fleet was ready. It had swept the North Sea for the enemy and failed to find him. And now, in one of the First Lord's most self-revealing figures of speech, "the nose of the bulldog has been slanted backwards so that he can breathe without letting go". Moreover, "if the German Fleet don't come out to fight us they'll be dug out like rats from a hole". That was at the very beginning of the War, and Churchill was not yet forty.

In the Cabinet he was established as leader of the "War Party". But he had no personal following in the House of Commons. The Radicals distrusted him, as an open advocate of conscription on the principle that "if you do it now the nation'll swallow it at a gulp"; and, of course, the Tories still nourished something more actively poisonous than a grudge. Still, he was the man who had to get the Expeditionary Force across to France in safety, and it was therefore necessary to put up with him. In a peculiar sense he was "the man", for by this time everyone knew well that he dominated the Admiralty. The First Sea Lord, Prince Louis, was little more than a figurehead, chosen by the First Lord. And the world was not yet fully aware of the existence of a figure behind—Jackie Fisher.

The political circumstances under which the Antwerp Expedition was launched were not, therefore, auspicious. Already there was an atmosphere of rather carping criticism. Churchill was unpopular with the politicians, however well he might stand with the country.

The four-day battle of the Marne was raging on a front of 180 miles, and the French Army of a million was in full retreat. The Belgian strongholds of Liège and Namur had fallen, but the great fortress of Antwerp still protected the flank of the Allies, and as long as it remained in their hands there could be no German drive to the coast. Hence the Kaiser's imperative orders for its capture. The bombardment of the outer ring of fortifications by the dreaded 17-inch howitzers began on September 28th, and four days later the Belgian Government sent out an urgent S O S. If

help did not arrive speedily there was grave danger of the capture of the Government itself.

These facts—or something like them—at last reached Whitehall. Kitchener was horrified. If Antwerp fell prematurely the left flank of the Allies would be laid open, and the whole line might well be rolled up in total defeat.

There was a midnight conference at Kitchener's house to which Churchill dashed back when on his way to Dunkirk, where the "Dunkirk circus"—a strange composite force under his own control—had a job in hand. Kitchener explained that the British Army designed for the relief of Antwerp was not ready—could not be ready for three or four days. Would Churchill dash to Antwerp instead of Dunkirk, explain the position to de Broqueville, the Belgian Prime Minister, and urge him to hold on with the help of the Royal Naval Division, all the troops that could be spared? Churchill said yes, and went.

That is really the whole story—except that Churchill went about his mission in his own way. He has always done things in his own way, which has not infrequently been unconventional.

I was in Ghent at the time, but the First Lord's appearance was very adequately chronicled by my friend, Mr. E. A. Powell, one of the American correspondents, who did not miss any element of the picturesque.

"At one o'clock that afternoon," wrote Mr. Powell, "a big, drab-coloured touring-car filled with British naval officers drove down the Place de Mer, its horn sounding a hoarse warning, took the turn into the March-aux-Souliers on two wheels, and drew up in front of the hotel. Before the car had fairly come to a stop the door of the tonneau was thrown violently open and out jumped a smooth-faced, sandy-haired, stoop-shouldered, youthful-looking man in undress Trinity House uniform. . . .

"As he charged into the crowded lobby he flung his arms out, in a nervous characteristic gesture, as though pushing his way through a crowd. It was a most spectacular

entrance, and reminded me for all the world of a scene in a melodrama where the hero dashes up bare-headed on a foam-flecked horse, and saves the heroine, or the old homestead, or the family fortune, as the case may be."¹

Winston, at any rate, rose to the occasion. As usual, the job in hand—his own particular job—was the only thing that mattered in the whole world. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might. To impress de Broqueville with his authority as an emissary of the British Government, and First Lord of the Admiralty, he had come out wearing his official uniform, but now, casting it aside, he became the plain soldier of Sudan and South Africa days.

"Churchill," wrote Ian Hamilton, "handles them" (his men) "as though he were Napoleon and they the Old Guard. He flings them right into the enemy's opening jaws." Sir Ian always had a habit of polishing his periods, and in Churchill he clearly discerned a kindred spirit, whether in South Africa, Belgium or Gallipoli; but the phrase can stand. It is difficult to imagine Churchill doing anything else under the circumstances.

Although the case for the Antwerp expedition is clear to the point of unanswerability, there is no incident in Churchill's career that has been more violently distorted to his disadvantage.

When the absurd legend that he ran away from Kitchener before Kitchener had had time to say "No" was exploded by the evidence of Lord Grey, who was there, the legend of Kitchener having been over-persuaded by Churchill's silver tongue was substituted. When it was shown that the Royal Naval Division was despatched by Kitchener's orders, it was alleged that Churchill had absurdly misinterpreted his instructions. When it was discovered that Churchill had offered to resign the Admiralty in exchange for a command in the field his action was scornfully ridiculed as another example of Churchillian braggadocio, in spite

¹ E. A. Powell, *Fighting in Flanders*, Heinemann, 1914.

of the fact that the proposal had actually been favoured by Kitchener. "I can't," Mr. Asquith is alleged to have declared, "put an ex-cavalry subaltern in command of major-generals." Finally, Churchill is said to have, of his own volition, or by "misinterpretation" of his instructions, led the Royal Naval Division into a cul de sac where they could be of no possible use to anybody, but could merely suffer uselessly—"a pitiful loss of brave men's lives".

As usual, Churchill to a great extent was himself to blame: he played his enemies' game. He rushed off to Antwerp fully convinced that he and the British Army would be able to save the fortress, and thus perform the inestimable service of protecting the flank of the Allies. In this he failed; but it was a gallant failure, and most valuable up to a point, as I know from personal contact.

II. GRAND FLEET

When Antwerp gave a handle to Churchill's enemies the War was already two months old, and there were five months still to go before the curtain rose on Gallipoli.

They were the most difficult seven months that the Fleet had to encounter in the whole course of the war, not even excepting the height of the submarine campaign, for Germany had not yet been swept from the high seas and Britain's margin of safety was comparatively small. In the background Fisher was straining at the leash, but the future Lord Milford Haven was still First Sea Lord—in ill health, and increasingly conscious of an unreasoning, but understandable, current of unpopularity and distrust. Churchill had a great name in the country, but was unpopular in Parliament and had a bad Press. Though the ball was at his feet it was difficult for him to kick it.

Germany was playing a waiting game. The official policy of the High Seas Fleet—the policy, that is to say, of Kaiser Wilhelm, the politician, rather than Von Tirpitz, the sailor—was to hold back until the margin of Britain's

sea power had been worn down by raid, mine or submarine, and then to risk all upon a battle in blue water. It was a policy that irked Churchill, with his instinct for the attack and natural impatience. He was all for "digging out the rats". Wiser counsels prevailed; but the strain was there.

The first incident of the war on sea went, on the whole, in favour of this country. Within an hour of the Fleet order, "Prepare for war with England", the armed merchantman, *Koningen Luise*, sailed for the Thames estuary to lay a minefield there, and on her way dropped a few mines off Aldburgh, on the Suffolk coast. She was sunk by the destroyers *Lance* and *Landrail*. But England suffered the first warship casualty when the *Amphion* ran upon one of her mines, with a loss of 150 lives.

Much to the satisfaction of the Admiralty as a body, though Churchill was possibly disappointed at the Germans' lack of enterprise, there was no serious attempt to interfere with the Expeditionary Force. The First Lord was one of those who had fought hard in the Cabinet for its immediate despatch, and by August 23rd 240 transports had made the passage of the channel without the loss of a single life. It was a notable achievement, yet a curious one; for at the outset of the war Dover was by no means the strongest point in the organisation of the British Navy.

On August 28th Churchill had the joy of being justly able to claim first naval laurels for the Grand Fleet when Beatty made a daring raid into Heligoland Bight and wiped out three German cruisers and a destroyer, with a loss to the enemy of 700 men killed, against a British loss of 35 killed. Tirpitz was furious, but the Kaiser still held back the main fleet, and thus allowed Beatty to escape.

The next brush with the enemy was far less happy, a month later. The *Aboukir*, *Hogue* and *Cressy* were steaming slowly in line abreast off the Dutch coast in the early morning of September 22nd when they were torpedoed in quick succession with a loss of 1,400 lives. Churchill was sharply blamed for the disaster, and not till later was it known that

if his order for the withdrawal of the "live bait squadron" had been promptly obeyed it would not have occurred. It was particularly unlucky that it came on the very day after his declaration that if the German Fleet did not come out and fight it would be dug out "like rats from a hole", and he was charged with an amateur's ignorance of the risks run at sea. But the fact of the matter was that nobody had yet awakened to the menace of the U-boats. From this point forward they were to be a determining factor in the war at sea, and an ever-present terror to the British Admiralty. Churchill shared in that terror, but refused to be dominated by it. That was one of the counts against him.

It has already been said that the first two months were difficult days for the Navy. The *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* was at large, preying on our merchantmen. The *Goeben* and *Breslau* had slipped out of Messina harbour and reached Constantinople, there to exercise a momentous effect upon future events. The *Emden* and *Konigsberg* were sinking ships in the Indian Ocean. The *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* were lurking off the west coast of South America, an ever-present menace to allied shipping. Then on October 28th came the unlucky loss by mine of the *Audacious*.

This followed closely upon the heels of the reputed failure of the Antwerp expedition, with its concentration of notice upon the personality of the First Lord. For every misfortune Churchill was given his full share of blame. He was not the man to blench; but it was pretty clear that something would have to be done. That something was the recall of Fisher to his old post as First Sea Lord.

It was a daring thing for Churchill to do. Fisher was the idol of the Tories and the *bête noir* of the Liberals, who were in power. He took not the smallest pains to disguise where his political sympathies lay; he was seventy-four years of age; and his temper was notorious. But Churchill fought hard for him and brought him back. At the same time he wrote to Prince Louis of Battenberg:

"This is no ordinary war, but a struggle between nations for life or death. It raises passions between races of the most terrible kind. It effaces the old landmarks and frontiers of our civilisation. I cannot further oppose the wish you have during the past few weeks expressed to me to be released from the burden of responsibility which you have borne thus far with so much honour and success."

Just as Fisher was assuming office under these conditions came the unhappy defeat of Coronel.

A cruiser squadron under the command of Sir Christopher Cradock was attacked in overwhelming force off Coronel, in Chile, by five German warships under Admiral Graf von Spee. Hoping at least to cripple the Germans, Cradock gave battle, but his little squadron, hopelessly outgunned, was practically destroyed, the admiral himself going down with the *Good Hope*.

The powers at the Admiralty—including Churchill—were greatly blamed in this affair for having sent to reinforce Cradock a middle-aged battleship, the *Canopus*, only capable of steaming 13 knots. Cradock, instead of sheltering under her big umbrella as was intended, used her as a convoy, and at the time the engagement opened she was 200 miles to the south with a couple of colliers. To have sent such a ship on such a mission was doubtful wisdom, and Churchill naturally got the blame again.

Fisher came back to the Admiralty at the moment Coronel was being fought. He acted with characteristic vigour and promptitude. The battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* were despatched post-haste to the scene of action (the Grand Fleet being thus gravely weakened for the moment), found von Spee to the south east of the Falkland Islands five weeks later, and smashingly defeated him in the one decisive naval battle of the War. Von Spee's powerful squadron was wiped out, and von Spee and his two sons killed.

From this time onward Germany could no longer challenge the control of the outer seas, and her naval operations were confined to home waters. The first phase of the sea struggle was over.

It was a tremendous triumph for Fisher's big stick. He was at once established firmly in his new post; so firmly that nothing short of a cataclysm could have shaken him out of it. Churchill wrote:

MY DEAR,

This was your show and your luck. I should only have sent one "Greyhound" and "Defence." These would have done the trick.

But it was a great coup. Your flair was quite true. Let us have some more victories together and confound all our enemies abroad—and (don't forget) at home.¹

As for Fisher, he wrote to a friend: "I am working hard. I am in the position of playing a game of chess very badly begun. . . . It is long and arduous to get back to a good position with a consummate good player for an enemy. *But I'm trying.* Let him not that putteth his armour on boast himself like him that taketh it off."

At first it seemed as though Fisher and Churchill would settle down together amicably enough. "Jackie" (or more often "old Jackie") as he was generally called behind his back, was seventy-four years of age, and Churchill was barely forty, but the difference in years promised well. The veteran appeared to feel no doubt about his ability to manage the headstrong youngster, however much the indulgence of Prince Louis might have spoilt him. Besides, had not he (Fisher) served on cordial terms under no fewer than eight other First Sea Lords? Why should the ninth—the man who more than any of the others was his friend, almost his "soul mate"—prove impossible?

¹ Sir R. S. C. Bacon, *Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, Hodder and Stoughton.

But circumstances were in reality very different from what they had been during any of Fisher's earlier terms of office. This Navy was in a peculiar sense *his* Navy, prepared by his secret advice, as shadow First Sea Lord, for this war. It was his heart's delight. How could anyone else dare touch it? Churchill, although he might not know it, had merely been his instrument—the instrument of the creative genius of Nelson-come-to-life-again. No, he would not, could not, dare, thought Fisher. But he did dare.

The First Lord and the First Sea Lord were, in fact, much too much alike. They both dared illimitably. There was not a fence in the world that either of them would not cheerfully and hopefully tackle. And the most pitiful thing about it was that they loved one another only short of idolatry. No marriage of minds can exist for long on such terms.

The difficulty was accentuated by a certain similarity in their upbringing. Both were, in one sense, uneducated men; that is to say, they had never submitted in youth to the harsh pressure of a standard education. Churchill's case we know already. Fisher's case was that of a man with no complete technical training (for he was too old to have come within close range of the extraordinarily elaborate modern technique of the Navy), and without the finish imparted by a staff education. Both, in short, were rather raw men of genius. Their strategical ideas were not infrequently superb: their tactical methods were apt to be faulty. And in nine cases out of ten it is tactics that win the day.

Another point that has to be made in any discussion of the relations subsisting between Churchill and Fisher, and their tragic issue, is that of Fisher's intense loyalty to the First Lord. He knew that Churchill had risked much to bring him back to the Admiralty. He knew that Tory distrust and fear were far too deep-seated to offer the First Lord any sure foothold, while, on the other

hand, by this nomination, he had cut himself adrift from Liberal support. The misunderstanding between Churchill and Bonar Law was not a thing of yesterday, and was not likely to be dispelled to-morrow, although no open breach existed. Bonar Law's point of view had been well expressed when he said: "I consider Churchill a most formidable antagonist. None the less, I would rather have him in opposition than on my side."

Thus the political situation was unfavourable. Fisher regarded it as one calling for his loyal support of a colleague. He gave that support with both hands; but it entailed a terrific strain upon his sense of duty.

"It really is *curious* why they hate you so," said Fisher on one occasion. And Churchill seems to have thought it curious too, for he wrote: "I never joined in an intrigue. Everything I have got I have fought for. And yet I have been more hated than anybody." One can only remark, on scanning the page of history, that these two men were indeed a pair of innocents.

For a few weeks, however, they settled down together in great apparent amity. Fisher (aged seventy-four, and with a vast weight of responsibility resting on his shoulders) went to bed at eight o'clock and rose between four and five in the morning, ready to tackle messages that had come in during the night and the enormous memoranda that were sure to have been prepared for his perusal by the First Lord. The First Lord, having indited these memoranda, usually went to bed late and got up pretty late, by which time the comments of the First Sea Lord were ready. They used cheerily to speak of one another as Port and Starboard, Fisher using a green pencil and Churchill red ink.

It is almost an idyllic picture—age and youth sharing out the day between them, mutually benefiting by sage counsel and vigorous enthusiasm. But the picture is deceptive. Of all old men Fisher was the most youthful and headstrong; of all young men Churchill the most in

need of the balanced view, the weighty and judicious estimate. They should have been complementary; instead, they reinforced the defects of one another's qualities.

What could be more enlightening than the following contemporary note in Mr. Asquith's diary?

"Winston suddenly became very confidential and implored me not to take a conventional view of his future. Having, as he said, tasted blood (at Antwerp) these last few days he is beginning, like a tiger, to raven for more, and begs that, sooner or later—and the sooner the better—he may be relieved of his office and 'put in some kind of military command. I told him that he could not be spared from the Admiralty, but he scoffs at that, alleging that the naval part of the business is practically over, as our strength will grow greater and greater every month.

"Are these 'glittering commands' to be entrusted to 'dug-out trash' bred on the obsolete tactics of twenty years ago, 'mediocrities who have led a sheltered life, mouldering in military routine', etc. etc.? For about a quarter of an hour he poured forth a ceaseless cataract of invective and appeal, and I much regretted there was no shorthand writer within hearing, as some of his unpremeditated phrases were quite priceless. He was, however, three-parts serious, and declared that a political career was nothing to him in comparison with military glory."¹

Here one gets a glimpse, through the medium of a mildly mordant sarcasm, of the essential boy in Churchill that is always peeping round the corner, inviting mockery. It was nothing short of a tragedy that that romantic youngster should, at a time of crisis, have been subjected to terrific stimulation by another Peter Pan.

Coming down to practical details of organisation, it is plain that one of the principal difficulties of Fisher's position arose from the fact that, in the reorganisation of the Admiralty, the office of Naval Chief of Staff had been

¹ Lord Oxford and Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, Cassell & Co., 1928.

divorced from that of First Sea Lord. This was a constant cause of trouble. Theoretically there were sound enough reasons for the divorce, but in practice it led to a good deal of overlapping of authority and unwise distribution of responsibility. It was, in fact, one of the main reasons that had led to Sir Arthur Wilson ceasing to be First Sea Lord three years earlier. A strong and active First Lord was able to use the arrangement as a means of concentrating authority in his own hands, and the executive power of the First Sea Lord was correspondingly reduced. That that was Churchill's object may be doubted, but that was how it worked.

Fisher had hardly arrived at the Admiralty when he settled down to what was in reality his principal task—the construction of a vast new armada. The Navy was to be re-equipped and strengthened in every department. Its supremacy was to be absolutely unchallengeable. Plans were put in hand for building at top speed 600 new vessels of all but the heaviest types, from cruiser to monitor and fleet auxiliary. Money was of no account. The shipbuilders of America were roped in—and paid. New shipyards were created by a wave of the wand. "Megalomania," Fisher exclaimed, "is the only form of sanity"; and, again, "the true war spirit is opposed to the short sighted, prudent housewifery of the peace-time mind". In the execution of their joint building programme, at any rate, the pair kept in step. Two minds with but a single thought concentrated upon the creation of a vast, beautiful, horrific engine of destruction that should stagger the world.

Yet even here there was a source of impending conflict. Many of these new ships were intended by Fisher not to be employed upon the general work of the Navy but for a very special purpose—a landing in the Baltic, designed to finish the war at a blow. This secret fleet was to be used for striking at the very vitals of the enemy. But the blow was never delivered. Gradually the new keels were diverted to another area of operations, a

formidable rival in the field of the wider strategy, a monster mouth capable of swallowing all the new ships and more—the Dardanelles.

Insufficient stress has been laid upon the effect which the Baltic project had upon Fisher's mind when, in despair, he made his final, irrevocable decision. He was profoundly convinced that the only way to end the war quickly was to make a sudden descent upon the coast of Germany. There was never any real hope of his persuading the Government to sanction such an enterprise, which was beset with immense technical difficulties and prodigious risks, but he stuck tenaciously to the idea, and it broke his heart to see the armada that was slowly being assembled for this supreme object being, as he thought, frittered away upon an enterprise of equal difficulty (allowing for the greater distance from the base of operations) and less sensational possibilities. Churchill and Fisher were backing rival horses up to, and beyond, the limit of their means.

Churchill's relations with Jellicoe were at the same time apt to be increasingly critical. He was irritated by Jellicoe's "cautious and far from sanguine mood", with its dread of the submarine and its "defensive habit of mind". Jellicoe was always throwing doubts upon the accuracy of the Intelligence Department's estimates of margins of safety. He would double the margin, and then not be quite sure that he had allowed enough. He was convinced that Germany always had reserves of which the I.D. knew nothing. Churchill secretly quoted against him the words of Napoleon, when he said: "We are defeated on sea because my admirals have learnt—where I do not know—that war can be made without running risks."

Nevertheless, in his comment later upon the Battle of Jutland he could write: "The Nelson touch arose from years of fighting between the strongest ships of the time. Nelson's genius enabled him to measure truly the consequences of any decision. His genius worked on precise

data. He had seen the same thing happen on a less great scale many times before the Battle of Trafalgar. Nelson did not have to worry about under-water damage. He felt he knew what would happen in a fleet action, Jellicoe did not know. Nobody knew. All we knew was that a complete victory would not improve decisively an already favourable situation and that a total defeat would lose the war."¹

Excuses of this sort apart, the man for Churchill's money was Beatty. The disappointment of the battle of the Dogger Bank was all the more keen, in spite of the loss of the *Blucher*, but he put a brave face on it by writing: "The action on Sunday bears out all I have thought relative to British and German strength. It is clear that, at five to four, they have no thought but flight, and that a battle fought on this margin could have only one ending. The immense power of the 13.5 gun is clearly decisive on the minds of the enemy as well as on the progress of the action. I should not feel the slightest anxiety at the idea of engaging with equality."

Two extracts may fittingly close this chapter. The first is from Churchill's *The World Crisis*; the second from the official life of Fisher by Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon.

"A series of absurd conventions," wrote Churchill, "became established in the public mind. The first and most monstrous of these was that the generals and admirals were more competent to deal with the broad issues of the war than the abler men in other spheres of life.

"The general, no doubt, was an expert on how to move his troops, and the admiral upon how to fight his ships, though even in this restricted field the limitations of their scientific knowledge when confronted with unforeseen conditions and undreamt-of scales became immediately apparent. But outside these technical aspects they were helpless and misleading arbiters in problems in whose solution the aid of the statesman, the financier, the manufacturer, the inventor, the psychologist, was equally required.

¹ W. S. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, Thornton Butterworth.

"The foolish doctrine was preached to the public through innumerable agencies that the generals and admirals must be right on war matters, and civilians of all kinds must be wrong. These erroneous conceptions were inculcated billionfold by the newspapers under the crudest forms. The feeble or presumptuous politician is portrayed cowering in his office, intent in the crash of the world on party intrigues or personal glorification, fearful of responsibility, incapable of aught save shallow phrase-making.

"To him enters the calm, noble, resolute figure of the great commander by land or sea, resplendent in uniform, glittering with decorations, irradiating all the lustre of the hero, shod with the science and armoured with the panoply of war. This stately figure, devoid of the slightest thought of self, offers his clear, far-sighted guidance and counsel for action or artifice or wise delay. His advice is rejected; his sound plans put aside; his courageous initiative baffled by political incompetence. As well, it was suggested, might a great surgeon, about to operate with sure science and the study of a lifetime upon a desperate case, have his arm jogged or his hand impeded, or even his lancet snatched from him, by some agitated relation of the patient. Such was the picture presented to the public, and such the mood which ruled. It was not, however, entirely in accordance with the facts; and facts, especially in war, are stubborn things."

Here is Sir Reginald Bacon's contrasting view of the situation.

"From the first moment that he entered the Admiralty he entirely mistook the functions of his office. . . . His brilliant abilities were of themselves sufficient to ensure his failure. . . . His courage, which led him to make important and valuable decisions on civil matters, also reacted on his profound belief in his own opinions and made him venturesome in the extreme in enforcing his own views. His keen brain and fertile imagination served to strengthen his

belief in his own infallibility. His indomitable energy caused him to meddle in innumerable details that were infinitely better left to the technical officers who had the practical experience necessary to deal with them. His immense range of superficial knowledge beguiled him into believing that that knowledge was accurate and profound. In executive command in the field he would in all probability have earned undying fame, but temperamentally he was unsuited to fill the post of civilian head of a mighty technical department in war time."

And so to Gallipoli.

III. GALLIPOLI

On March 2nd, 1915, a cable reached me in Cairo: "Go Constantinople immediately." Such was the atmosphere in London.

As we now know, the War Council had met at the end of January, and (according to the official Dardanelles Report) "in an atmosphere of vagueness and want of decision" had decided to embark upon the Dardanelles campaign "without some of those at the meeting having any very clear idea of what had or had not been achieved". Fisher had sat silent. He never spoke upon these occasions unless he was spoken to. He was there as a technical adviser, not as a member of the War Council, and he seems to have thought that his duty was done when he had protested to Churchill in private.

The troops won a foothold, but nothing more. In London there was increasing and bitter disappointment. Strange as it may seem, it was thought that the order "Go Constantinople immediately" could soon be obeyed, for that now the troops were ashore the way would be clear. There was no conception of the difficulties that had to be encountered, or of the heroic preparations for resistance that had been made by the German-inspired Turkish Army and Navy. In fact, the home public had not

as yet realised that the Germans attached at least as great importance to the back door as did Churchill himself.

As for Churchill, he was distraught. "You are very wrong to worry and excite yourself," said Fisher, unexpectedly turning comforter. Depressed at first, Churchill pulled himself together and set his teeth. From now onwards, it was *Athanasius contra mundum*. He hung on like a bulldog: there was nothing else to do. It was too late to turn back. Everything had been staked on this throw of the dice. It was, after all, "a legitimate war gamble", and if only the fearful lack of cohesive effort at home could even now be replaced by a command that knew its own mind Constantinople (now Istanbul) might be won.

But Kitchener was turning his face more and more to the Western Front: Fisher was hankering more and more after his lost Baltic enterprise and declaring that "the decisive theatre remains and will always be the North Sea". At last, in the middle of May, three weeks after the Anzac landing, Fisher took the first overt step. "Either the *Queen Elizabeth* leaves the Dardanelles to-night or I leave the Admiralty to-night," he told Kitchener; and it was the *Queen Elizabeth* that left. A fortnight later a dummy *Queen Elizabeth* which had taken the place of the original was torpedoed.

Then, only three days later, came an apparently trivial incident. Churchill and he had made it up; had, as it were, signed a pact and buried the hatchet, and the First Sea Lord was to have control of his own ships. On the same night Churchill sat down and wrote one of his voluminous and characteristic memoranda. He did not wish it to be understood as such, but it did in fact insist once more upon the First Lord's inherent right to dispose of the Fleet as he chose. The moment Fisher saw it he resigned.

Some light may be thrown upon the relations that subsisted between the two men in the following note from Churchill to the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith), on May 14th, the eve of the final rupture:

"I am attached to the old boy, and it is a great pleasure to me to work with him. I think he reciprocates this feeling. My point is that a moment will arise in those operations when the Admiral and General on the spot will wish and require to run a risk with the Fleet for a great and decisive effort. If I agree with them I shall sanction it; and I cannot consent to be paralysed by the veto of a friend who, whatever the result, will always say 'I was always against the Dardanelles.'"¹

There followed a series of amazing events. Fisher was beside himself. It is doubtful if he really knew what he was doing. *His* fleet, the incomparable and perfect creation of his genius, was to be taken from him, handed over to an amateur, wrecked, wasted, squandered. The war was to be lost: he saw it all! The "damned Dardanelles" were to tear the heart out of the Navy. The North Sea was to be a private German lake. . . .

He shut himself up in the First Sea Lord's house adjoining the Admiralty, and pulled down the blinds. Then he sent Churchill the following note:

"FIRST LORD,

"After further anxious reflection I have come to the regretted conclusion I am unable to remain any longer as your colleague. It is undesirable, in the public interests, to go into details—Jowett said 'Never explain'—but I find it increasingly difficult to adjust myself to the increasing daily requirements of the Dardanelles to meet your views. As you truly said yesterday, I am in the position of continually vetoing your proposals. This is not fair to you, besides being extremely distasteful to me. I am off to Scotland at once so as to avoid all questionings.

"Yours truly

"FISHER."

¹ Lord Oxford and Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, Cassell & Co., 1928.

At the same time he sent his resignation to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) replied: "LORD FISHER,—In the King's name I order you to remain at your post." Fisher had met his match.

But he had in effect "struck"—and struck, not because he thought it his duty, but because he dared not stand up to the "questionings", the pleadings, the arguments of a silver-tongued friend! It was surely the strangest case of mutiny in time of war that has been recorded.

But the fates had not yet done with Churchill. He went down to the House with a new Board of Admiralty in his pocket—a "tame" board, so Bonar Law described it. And he found that his friend, Asquith, had at last been forced by Conservative pressure, using to the full the foothold afforded by Fisher's resignation, to form a Coalition Government. Balfour, his old opponent in the days when he was the rising hope of the Radicals, was to be the new First Lord. The Tories' hate was consummated. Churchill was to be fobbed off with the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster. Fisher had brought the whole house toppling down about his ears.

"The hours," had written Winston Churchill, prisoner of war in Pretoria, "crawled by like paralytic centipedes." And again, at Omdurman: "In one respect a cavalry charge is very like ordinary life. So long as you are all right, firmly in the saddle, your horse in hand, and well armed, lots of enemies will give you a wide berth. But you have lost a stirrup, have a rein cut, have dropped a weapon, are wounded, or your horse is wounded; then is the moment when from all quarters enemies rush upon you."

At the Duchy of Lancaster he pined. He was excluded from the War Council, and had no direct influence upon policy. He was paid £4,000 a year for doing nothing, and ate his heart out. His depression was painful to witness. All efforts by his friends to prevent this humiliation had failed, an offer of the Colonial Office (in succession to Bonar Law) and of the Office of Governor General and

Commander-in-Chief in East Africa, where he would have had the consolation of active service, coming to nothing. As he was to say later about the position of the Greek Armies in Anatolia, it was, with him, a case of "rot, rot, rot; drip, drip, drip".

At last he could stand it no longer. He wrote to Mr. Asquith:

Knowing what I do about the present situation and the instrument of executive power, I could not accept a position without any executive share in its guidance and control. Even when decisions of principle are rightly taken the speed and method of their execution are factors which determine the result. Nor do I feel able in times like these to remain in well-paid inactivity.

I therefore ask you to submit my resignation to the King. I am an officer, and I place myself unreservedly at the disposal of the military authorities, observing that my regiment is in France. I have a clear conscience which enables me to bear my responsibility for past events with composure.

Nothing now remained but to say good-bye. Churchill's farewell was a notable triumph: the House of Commons was swept off its feet. It was possibly his greatest speech.

"There is no reason," he declared, "to be disheartened about the progress of the war. We are passing through a bad time now, and it will probably be worse before it is better, but that it will be better, if we only endure and persevere, I have no doubt whatever. The old wars were decided by their episodes rather than by their tendencies. In this war the tendencies are far more important than the episodes. Without winning any sensational victory we may win this war.

"It is not necessary in order to win the war to push the German lines back over all the territory absorbed, or to pierce them. While the German lines extend far beyond

her own frontiers, and while her flag flies over great capitals and subjected provinces, while all the circumstances of military success attend her armies, Germany may be defeated more fatally in the second or third year of the war than if the Allied armies had entered Berlin in the first.

"Some of these small States are hypnotised by German military pomp and precision. They see the glitter, they see the episode; but what they do not see or realise is the capacity of the ancient and mighty nations against whom Germany is warring to endure adversity, to put up with disappointment and mismanagement, to renew their strength, to toil on with boundless suffering to the achievement of the greatest cause for which men have ever fought."

On the specific cause of his resignation he had a stinging word or two to say to Fisher.

"I did not receive," said he, "from the First Sea Lord either the clear guidance before the event, or the firm support after, which I was entitled to expect. If he did not approve the operations he should have spoken out in the War Council. War is a hard and brutal job, and there is no place in it for misgivings and reserves. Nobody ever launched an attack without having misgivings beforehand. You ought to have misgivings before; but when the moment of action is come the hour for misgivings is past. A man must answer Yes or No to the great questions which are put, and by that decision he must be bound. . . .

"No one could have prevailed against his refusal. The operations would never have been begun. That was the time for resignation. He did not take that course. He hoped—as I did, as the War Council did—that a speedy success would result. Had it resulted I think he would have had some of the credit."

Finally, he declared himself still an unabashed Easterner. "All through this year I have offered the some counsel to the Government: Undertake no operation in the West which is more costly to us in lives than to the enemy. In the East, take Constantinople. Take it by ships if you can.

Take it by soldiers if you must. Take it by whichever plan, military or naval, commends itself to your military experts. But take it; take it soon, take it while time remains."

"A wise counsellor, a brilliant colleague, a faithful friend," said Asquith, who had chosen him.

"He has," said Bonar Law, who had rejected him, "the defects of his qualities, and as his qualities are large the shadow they throw is pretty large also. But I say deliberately that in mental power and vital force he is one of the foremost men in our country."

And so he went out, as Major Churchill of the Grenadiers.

IV. TANKS

Just one month after Churchill went to the Front Gallipoli was evacuated. It was a bitter blow. One of his consolations in leaving the parliamentary scene had been that at least his successor at the Admiralty, Arthur Balfour, was sound upon the Dardanelles; and now it had come to this. "Divided counsels, half-hearted measures, grudging resources, makeshift plans," had had their inevitable result; and 34,000 lives had been lost.

Some account of how things went with him in Flanders has been given in the earlier chapter dealing with "Churchill the Soldier", but the bitter disappointment of his missing finally high rank in the Army (owing to French's supersession by Haig) must be emphasised again. It strikes the keynote of his whole career. Nature had intended him not for a politician but for a soldier, and there is little doubt that she would have succeeded in her intention had it not been for his having been born a politician's son. He had been "a lost soul", according to Lord Beaverbrook, when he was about to lose the Admiralty: he was bitterly "disappointed and hurt", according to General Seely, when he lost the hope of high military command. General Seely's is the more pathetic figure of the two.

Dashing back to Parliament before that blow fell, he

showed at least that he had still the power to rise above circumstance and be master of himself. Members could hardly believe their ears when he asked for the recall of Fisher, now that the affair of the Dardanelles was out of the way, and asked it, too, with Fisher listening grimly from the Peers' gallery.

"There was a time," said he, "when I did not think I could have brought myself to say it. But I have been away for some months and my mind is now clear. I urge the First Lord of the Admiralty (Mr. Balfour) without delay to fortify himself, to vitalise and animate his board, by recalling Lord Fisher as First Sea Lord."

The stream of memoranda—embodying his astonishing itch to give advice—was also unchecked for, upon returning from the Front, he circulated through his friend, Lord Birkenhead, a memorandum on the Battle of the Somme, which mightily offended G.H.Q. in France.

"So long," he wrote, "as an army possesses strong offensive power it rivets its adversaries' attention. But when the kick is out of it, when the long-saved-up effort has been expended, the enemy's anxiety is relieved and he recovers his freedom of movement. This is the danger into which we are now drifting. We are using up division after division—not only those originally concentrated for the attack but many taken from all parts of the line. After being put through the mill, and losing perhaps half their infantry and two-thirds of their infantry officers, these shattered divisions will take several months to recover, especially as they will in many cases have to go into the trenches once more. Thus the pent-up energies of the army are being dissipated, and if the process is allowed to go on the enemy will not be in the need of keeping so many troops on one front as heretofore, but will then be able to restore or sustain the situation against Russia."

It will be noted that here again he had two objects in view: the prevention of the use of troops for merely "killing Germans", and the avoidance of a concentration of enemy

troops against Russia, the weakest spot (for political and other reasons) on the Allied front.

He also threw himself ("as a private member not without information on secret matters") into the battle for conscription that was then at its height; pressed for the formation of a separate Air Ministry; and busied himself with the preparation of evidence for the Dardanelles Committee. It is also interesting to note, as bearing upon his relations with the Asquith Coalition Government, that he was specially commissioned to prepare for circulation in the neutral Press a British version of the Battle of Jutland—the battle that in his imagination he had fought and won during those terrible last days at the Admiralty.

In December, 1916—the December following Churchill's truncated period of active service—Asquith resigned and Lloyd George formed his new coalition. Here at last was Churchill's chance. He was pining for some fresh adventure of power, seeing that the military arm had no use for him, and Lloyd George wished to give him either the latter's own pet ministry, Munitions, or the new Ministry of Air. But there were difficulties in the way. The Dardanelles Committee was still sitting; and, above all, Northcliffe was hostile. Hence for a time the project had to be shelved.

At a famous secret session of the House of Commons, however, he poured out his heart. He pleaded for the adoption of the principles of the Somme memorandum. He argued once again that no more lives must be wastefully sacrificed on "killing Germans"; that a policy of the "active defensive" must be adopted, and that in the meantime the submarine menace must be got under. Why, he asked, was this necessary? Because the armies of the United States were coming. Until they came the armies of the Allies should play a waiting game. There must be time for the armies of America to get here; and when they came the war would be ended.

The speech made an immense impression, not least

upon the new Prime Minister. It convinced him that the one man to take over the work of the Ministry of Munitions was Churchill, by reason of his inventive grasp of the machinery of war; by reason of his immense industry and drive; and by reason of the accident of birth, which gave him a foot in both camps of the Anglo-American alliance that was ultimately to decide the issue of battle. Lloyd George, too, was strongly hostile to a policy that concentrated upon merely "killing Germans". He, like Churchill, was an "Easterner", and for the same reason he was in full sympathy with the "active defensive".

Churchill, for his part, was enamoured of Lloyd George as a war chief. Compared with Asquith, he was a man after his own heart. L.G.'s intuition struck him as little short of superhuman, and he worshipped his "inexhaustible mental agility". The War, he felt, had produced The Man.

The reward, in 1917, when Northcliffe had been squared and the Tory opposition worn down, was Munitions. It was Churchill's happiest venture. It gave him full scope for all his enthusiasms—his drive and inventive imagination, his ability to organise a department, his power—like Fisher's at the Admiralty—of getting his own way in spite of opposition. Above all, it enabled him to develop his master idea—TANKS.

It would be waste of time to follow into the mists of antiquity the origin of the tank—whether Leonardo da Vinci or H. G. Wells first had the happy idea; but it was undoubtedly brought to birth by Churchill between the late autumn and early spring of 1914-15. Churchill and Admiral Bacon seem to have first discussed the matter as early as the September following the outbreak of war, when the suggestion of a bridge carried in front of a motor car and raised or lowered at will was mooted. Stimulus was supplied by the success of the Naval Division's armoured cars in Belgium, and their one difficulty—mines and trenched roads. Next we find Admiral Sueter proposing to Churchill some kind of armoured steam roller

that would be capable of rushing trenches, and Colonel Swinton laying definite proposals before the Committee of Imperial Defence, which sent them on to the Admiralty.

The initial decision was reached at a conference in the First Lord's bedroom—he was indisposed at the time—on February 20th, 1915, when a Landships Committee was formed, with Sir Tennyson D'Eyncourt, Chief Constructor to the Admiralty, as chairman. It laid down that a "landship", in order to be of service, must be capable of climbing a parapet $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and crossing a trench $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide; it must also be able to cross soft ground and to break through barbed wire entanglements.

In the beginning it seemed as though the child of the Landships Committee would be stillborn. There was neither money nor enthusiasm to bring it to life. The following month, therefore, Churchill, in his high-handed way, took the matter into his own hands. He ordered eighteen "landships", without informing either the Board of Admiralty or the Army Council. They were to cost £70,000, not a penny of which had been sanctioned. It was a parallel case to that of the Churchill-Fisher "hush-and-push" guns for the super-Dreadnoughts.

When, a few months later, Churchill was driven from the Admiralty, his successor, Arthur Balfour, cancelled the orders for all but one of the new-fangled monsters. But the one was enough. At the beginning of February, 1916, "Big Willie"—male "mother" of the whole brood of "tanks", as they were now called—was given her official trials, in the presence of the King, in the park of Hatfield, ancestral home of the Cecils. Kitchener was there as the Army's representative, and Lloyd George as the Cabinet's; also some officers from G.H.Q. in France. "K" was sceptical; "L.G." keen; the staff officers mildly interested. There is no record of what the King said.

"Big Willie" had a maximum speed of no more than two miles an hour on fairly hard ground, although his engine developed as much as 105 horse-power, and he had a

strange double-cartwheel rudder at his stern. But clumsy and slow as he was, he embodied the essential feature of all his tribe—the caterpillar tractor. Once the full possibilities and uses of the caterpillar tractor were understood the rest was merely a matter of evolution, just as the perfect fish was evolved once Nature had invented the tail and the fin.

As a result of the performance of "Big Willie"—the product of Admiralty enterprise and money—the War Office placed an order for forty similar machines on February 12th, and manufacture was begun at once with the utmost secrecy. The word "tank" had been officially adopted as a blind, a couple of months before the experiment in the presence of the King, on the suggestion of a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Every sort of difficulty was encountered in carrying through even the Army's modest first order, and Churchill himself was no longer in a position to help. But the determined movement to "scrap the lot" made when he left the Admiralty had at least been defeated, and he was confident that the very big thing for which "Big Willie" stood would now be able to win through by its own momentum. Shortly afterwards the War Office increased its order for tanks to 150, and in March a special "heavy section" of the Machine Gun Corps was formed to provide the necessary fighting force. The home battle was won.

The Army had, however, still to learn how to use tanks in the field. Their manufacture had been a well-kept secret, but the premature disclosure on the field of battle at Thiepval might have proved one of the major blunders of the war. Though out of office, Churchill was still active in Parliament, and he pleaded desperately with Mr. Asquith for a decision of the War Council to hold back the tanks until they could be revealed in overwhelming force, but nothing came of it. G.H.Q. must be permitted to play with its new toy. It didn't take the toy very seriously, but thought it would be nice to see what effect it had on the

enemy. Happily, the enemy proved equally obtuse, and did not profit by the lesson.

Forty-nine tanks were used at the battle of Thiepval, on Friday, September 15th, 1916, in the opening of the second phase of the Battle of the Somme. Haig's quiet reference to the matter was that "a new type of heavy armoured car proved of considerable utility". But the correspondent of *The Times* was less restrained.

The "herd" of tanks, said he, were just "huge, shapeless bulks resembling nothing else that was ever seen on earth, which wandered hither and thither like some vast antediluvian brutes which Nature had made and forgotten". They were "painted in venomous reptilian colours" and suggested "living things—hybrids between Behemoth and Chimera, toad-salamanders, echidne-dragons—anything you please that is mythical and phantastic". Above all, they were absurd. At each new antic "one could do nothing but sit down and laugh till one's sides ached". Making every allowance for the effect of a real novelty upon the mind of a blasé war correspondent, it is clear that the tanks created a considerable sensation.

The success was all the more remarkable on account of the appalling state of the ground—there had been continuous rain for something like three weeks—and the fact that the tanks were a primitive variety of the species, suffering from all the diseases of infancy. The German Army was flabbergasted—rather too much so, fortunately, to grasp the full significance of the portent. A British airman sent this message in his excitement: "A tank is walking up the High-street of Flers with the British Army cheering behind".

Strange as it may now seem, more than twelve months were to elapse before, at the battle of Cambrai, adequate use was made of the new weapon, by which date Churchill had become Minister of Munitions. Then, for the first time, conditions were suited to tank warfare. The enemy were not prepared by preliminary bombardment for an

offensive, and in consequence the ground was not cut up by artillery fire. The tanks opened the attack, instead of merely being used to support the infantry. Above all, there was complete surprise. "A battle made for them," as Churchill proudly said. In all 378 fighting tanks, and 98 auxiliary tanks, were employed.

"The attack," says the Official History of the Tank Corps, made by Canadian infantry under the command of Sir Julian Byng, "was a stupendous success. As the tanks moved forward with the infantry close behind, the enemy completely lost his balance, and those who did not fly panic-stricken from the field surrendered with little or no resistance. . . . By 4 p.m. on November 20th one of the most astonishing battles in all history was won". The German trench system was penetrated upon a front of six miles; 10,000 prisoners and 200 guns were captured. The British lost only 1,500 men!

The triumph of the tank was indeed complete. It was a primary instrument in securing the final verdict of the war, and a complete justification of the theories of its chief sponsor. That the verdict had been postponed so long, and at such a fearful sacrifice of lives, is one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of human conservatism and the inertia that hampers original genius. It was not, be it noted, that the idea was novel, but that it needed the final thrust of a dynamic mind to "put it over", as the Americans say; and that thrust was Churchill's.

The final word was Ludendorff's: "Two factors have had a decisive influence on our decision (to ask for an armistice), namely tanks and our reserves. The enemy met us with tanks in unexpectedly large numbers. In cases where they have suddenly emerged in huge numbers from smoke clouds our men were completely unnerved. The tanks broke through our foremost lines, making a way for their infantry, wrecking our rear, and causing local panics which entirely upset our battle control."

Such, then, is the strange history of the tanks in World

War One It overlaps by some sixteen months the appointment of Churchill to the Ministry of Munitions, but the history of that Ministry during Churchill's headship was largely a history of the great tanks idea and the preparation for a grim war of tanks in the future.

It was only Lloyd George's insistence and prestige that succeeded in restoring Winston to Cabinet office. L.G. had carefully prepared the ground. Northcliffe had been asked to go on a Government mission to the United States; Carson and Smuts had both been roped in behind the proposed appointment; Bonar Law was induced to reply sharply to a deputation of protest from the National Association of Conservative Associations. Even the fact that the report of the Dardanelles Committee was not yet three months old was not allowed to stand in the way. Lloyd George was determined to rally behind him the "first class brains" and, whatever might be his defects of judgment, Churchill was unquestionably one of these. So, upon July 16th, 1917, he took over his new post, having been out of office for twenty months. Dundee re-elected him with a smashing majority, and he was free to go ahead with the policy of his secret session speech: the "active defensive" and "waiting for America".

The department which he had inherited from Christopher Addison was already a vast organisation, utterly different from anything imagined possible when the munitions crisis broke about Asquith's head a little more than two years earlier. Megalomania, as Fisher had been fond of urging, had been taken as the true test of sanity in war time. Vast quantities of material, and vast masses of labour, were controlled by a staff of 12,000 civil servants, grouped in fifty departments.

Churchill at once decided that this was a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of one Minister—a decision that has an odd sound in view of his past ministerial record, but actually aimed at no more than the businesslike decentralisation of an enterprise that had outgrown the

control of any one man. He lost no time in setting to work. After his sad experience with Fisher at the Admiralty, it was a sheer delight to find that he was able to work on cordial terms with some of the best business brains in the country.

The fifty old groups were combined in less than a dozen new ones, and these were represented by a council of business men somewhat similar, in Churchill's view, to the Army Council or Board of Admiralty, but (also in Churchill's view) a good deal more efficient. They "combined the initiative and drive of the business world with the method of the Civil Service".

Every group was referred to by an initial, as follows: F for finance; D for design; S for steel and iron; M for materials; X for explosives; P for projectiles; G for guns; E for engines; A for Allies; L for labour; R for requirements and statistics; W for trench warfare and inventions.

The activities of the whole were co-ordinated by a Clamping Committee—Churchill's own characteristic name. The plan filled him with the sort of pride that a schoolboy feels when he has fitted together a perfect piece of "Meccano" engineering. Hey presto! It worked smoothly and beautifully, and the letters of the alphabet were the sort of abracadabra of its achievement. "Instead of struggling through the jungle on foot I rode comfortably on an elephant, whose trunk could pick up a pin or uproot a tree with equal ease, and from whose back a wide scene lay open". Has ever Minister of State so enjoyed his work, or been able to present so vivid a picture of its essentials?

"In the fourth year of the war," he wrote in a public manifesto, "we are no longer adapting the stored-up resources of national industry, or mobilising and modifying them for the first time in war. The magnitude of the achievement approximates continually to the limits of possibility. Already in many directions the frontiers are in sight. It is therefore necessary not merely to extend, but to go

back over ground already covered, and by more economical processes, by closer organisation, and by thrifty and harmonious methods, to glean and gather a further reinforcement of war power".

Twelve months earlier he had urged upon the Government "a greater application of mechanical power to the prosecution of the offensive on land". Now came his opportunity. He was convinced that tanks had been consistently misused and their prestige in consequence diminished, and this fitted in with his rooted opinion that lives were being needlessly wasted upon "killing Germans". If the back door could not be forced at Constantinople, the front door must be forced by this new method. It was all part of the same idea. Hence a fresh Churchill memorandum to the War Cabinet demanding the "organisation of mechanical processes", upon the principle that "someone must stop the tiger".

One of the main obstacles to be overcome in this campaign for a vast extension of the use of tanks was, ironically enough, the sturdy refusal of Sir Eric Geddes, Churchill's latest successor at the Admiralty, to be satisfied with anything less than his pound of flesh for the Navy. A battle royal for possession of the steel plates needed for a wide extension of the tanks programme raged for a time between the ex-First Lord and the new First Lord, who proved a match for Churchill in the tenacity with which he stuck to his guns. Geddes had the submarine menace as a perpetual preoccupation: Churchill had his pet scheme of a "mechanical" knock-out blow. Neither felt it possible to yield. At last Churchill resorted to guile. Having himself control of supplies, he gorged the insistent Geddes with steel plates, and when it could no longer be contended that there were not enough to take the balance for the tanks.

Then, happily, the U-boat pressure eased up, and both Geddes' and Churchill's main anxiety was relieved. The latter occupied the autumn of 1917 with intensive Press propaganda in the American and English papers for an

offensive use of the Navy on the text "Let the Navy help to win the war"—a fresh "dig 'em out" campaign—but nothing much came of it. Then at the beginning of 1918 he settled down to the task of equipping the American Army for Europe and bringing them across the Atlantic. It was a task after his own heart.

In the spring of the year, by no means enough was being done to bring America with all speed to the rescue of Europe, and Churchill was keenly alive to the fact. As we have seen, he believed that, in all human probability, the only way the war could be ended, short of complete European exhaustion and stalemate, was by bringing in the New World to redress the balance of the Old. Lloyd George was of the same opinion. Unless Germany could break through before the arrival of the American millions, both men were convinced that her game was up: the mere threat that America was upon the threshold would be enough to produce a collapse behind the fighting line, the collapse that ultimately ended the war.

Ludendorff knew this. Unless Germany won in 1918 she could not win at all. Accordingly, as soon as the winter was over he shot his bolt, and in March there developed the supreme crisis of the war—Germany's race against time to beat the Americans, helped by Churchill. It was a supreme joy to him to help. His parentage called him. His peculiar sympathy with the American mentality called him. His very fame on the American continent called him, for it gave him a power unique among all British Ministers to rally and arouse the New World. With joy he went to France this time, not as Colonel Churchill, but as the man who had been chosen by the Prime Minister to bring help to the beleaguered and hard-pressed line.

President Wilson rose to the height of the great argument. Nothing mattered now but winning the war. America's millions were to be poured across the Atlantic in the raw, equipped or unequipped, without commissariat services, without even a change of uniform. All that could be

arranged later. They were to be deprived, these raw troops, even of the tremendous moral support of *esprit de corps*, for they were to be absorbed in the French and English armies and to complete their training alongside the fighting men. The American sacrifice was superb. Nothing, now that America was in it with both feet, mattered but winning the war.

Meanwhile, it was Churchill's business to see to their equipment. By the end of the year America hoped to have forty-eight divisions in France—six armies, each requiring 12,000 guns, of which the U.S.A. was only able to supply a very small proportion. The financial arrangements were simple but efficient. To begin with, Churchill accepted a contract for £100,000,000 to supply the whole requirements of the American Army in medium artillery, no profit and no loss being made on either side. The accounts were to be completely open. It was a "gentleman's agreement" that worked admirably, and with complete satisfaction on both sides of the Atlantic, in spite of the fact that the heads of the respective departments—Churchill and Baruch—had never met.

While the dominating factor was the immense reserve of American manhood, the ceaseless pressure of the Allied armies upon the resources of the Ministry of Munitions continued, and the balance between men and munitions had to be adjusted with the utmost nicety. More men and more munitions, the one being mutually inconsistent with the other, were demanded in the same breath. And at the same time the Ministry was harassed by labour troubles. Churchill countered with the threat to withdraw immediately the munition workers' immunity from active service, and at the same time to "proceed with the utmost rigour of the law" against the ringleaders. The strike collapsed. But it left a black mark against his name in the books of Labour.

One of the prime zests of his life at this time consisted in his visits to the battle front. The French Government

had provided him with a delightful headquarters in France—the château of Verchocq, within the zone of the armies, and only two hours' aeroplane flight from Hendon. He could spend a morning at the Ministry of Munitions, follow the course of a battle in the afternoon, and return to Whitehall in time for dinner and the rest of the day's work in the evening. In this way he was present at almost every important battle during the rest of the war. Precisely what benefit was derived from these excursions is not clear, but it is doubtful if they were intended to have a precise object: what they certainly did do was to supply the Minister of Munitions with a fresh impetus for his campaign. His vivid imagination pictured the havoc below or around: it was but a short step to picturing the means of creating fresh havoc in the enemy's lines.

Criticism, needless to say, was not dumb at home. His old enemies, the disgruntled Tories and disillusioned Radicals, were hot on his track with allegations of frenzied finance leading inevitably to a great financial disaster. Churchill, as usual, was declared to be so spectacular as to constitute a national danger; and the old grievance of Gallipoli was played up for all it was worth. He replied that his business was frightfulness. He had, of set and deliberate purpose, dedicated his life to devising diabolical schemes.

The war of 1919 (which never materialised) was to be largely a war of tanks. Foch contemplated victory in the spring of that year, and the end in the autumn. Henry Ford accepted a contract for 10,000 tanks. They were to be moved forward simultaneously on fronts of 100 miles or more. Behind them were to be 10,000 more unarmed and unarmoured caterpillars packed with troops—capable of crossing all obstacles—hedges, ditches, trenches and wire—leaving the roads free for artillery and reserves. In the campaign of 1919 the horse was to vanish. Foch and Haig were at last behind the Big Idea.

Then came the crash, six months before its time. The battle before Amiens was a typical "tank battle", and one

of the decisive battles of the world. Six hundred tanks were employed in all (324 of them weighing over thirty tons apiece), low-flying aeroplanes were used to create a "noise barrage", and the tanks emerged from an artificial fog. On the first day a complete break-through was effected, and by the time the tanks ceased action four days later 22,000 prisoners and 400 guns had been taken.

When the news came in Churchill got into his airplane and took a couple of days' holiday on the battlefield. Rawlinson and his Fourth Army had—he noted with particular joy, for Rawlinson was an old friend of Omdurman and Antwerp and Ypres—used the tanks as they ought to be used, as a fearful surprise. From the Château Verchocq a month later, he sent the Prime Minister a memorandum that could have been written by nobody else. "The tank men," it said, "are killed and wounded in considerable numbers, and the wastage of the personnel is high, whereas the tank in any victorious battle recovers very quickly from his wounds and hardly ever dies beyond the hope of recovery. A few months' sojourn in the grave is nearly always followed by a reincarnation, so long, that is to say, as he is not snaffled by the powers of evil." This was intended to raise the question of the personnel of the Tank Corps, which he wished to see increased to 100,000.

By now the Americans were pouring in. Complete mastery of the high seas had been achieved. But Great Britain had lost that year up to July well over 400,000 men on the Western Front alone, not to mention the losses in Mesopotamia and Palestine and the Balkans. The Yankees had come none too soon.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of November 11th Churchill waited in his office at the Hotel Metropole, Charing Cross, for the unmistakable signal of victory. There would be no need any longer (so he thought) for that dedicated life. There would be no need any longer for

the "frightfulness" he had been preparing. There would be no need any longer for Henry Ford's ten thousand tanks.

Few men had lived every moment of World War One with such intensity of joy and misery, of elation and depression. Life had been worth living. He looked back across it all—the three years of secret preparation; the terrible, heart-searing battle with Fisher; the gloom and agony of the days that followed, and the brief joy of active service; the happy days of intensive preparation for the war that would never be. Yes, he was not sorry to have lived through it. Had he any vision of the future?

But now, something had snapped. Life's mainspring—and death's. For a moment he felt utterly empty. That "world of monstrous shadows, moving in convulsive combinations through vistas of fathomless catastrophe" which he had seemed to see in the early days—surely it had been a bad dream! But a dream with consequences. He went out to meet them.

VI

BUDGETEER AND GAZETTEER

THE CHANAK EPISODE—which closed Churchill's career at the Colonial Office and was one of the chief causes of the downfall of the second Lloyd George Coalition (created at the "Hang-the-Kaiser" general election)—had particularly unfortunate consequences for the Colonial Secretary himself. It took him the better part of two years to get back into Parliament. This was partly due to his identification with certain unpopular policies in the past, and partly to apparent instability of conviction in regard to certain policies of the present. He was, in fact, feeling his way back to his old Conservative allegiance.

Since his political baptism at Oldham in 1899 his pilgrimage was thus to make full circle: Conservative (Tory-Democrat), Unionist Free Trader, Liberal, Coalition

Liberal, Liberal Free Trader, Anti-Socialist, Constitutionalist, Conservative.

One of Churchill's most painful disappointments, ranking next to the crowning disappointment of being refused the rank of General in the British Army, had been caused by Lloyd George passing him over for Sir Robert Horne when Bonar Law's health caused him to resign the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer in the last Coalition Government for the War period. It was with proportionate pleasure that he received Mr. Baldwin's offer to take that post in the Conservative Government returned at the Red Letter election.

The appointment was viewed with suspicion by the Carlton Club, which shrewdly suspected him of having kept more than a taint of his old Cobdenite sympathies. But, under a pledge given by the Prime Minister, a Protectionist policy was specifically barred during the life of the new Parliament, except by way of small additions to the list of "safeguarded" industries. So the objection could hardly be pressed. Less tangible, but stronger, objections were even less easy to drive home. Besides, the City would certainly be pleased, recalling Lord Randolph's great fight for national economy, and believing that an old poacher makes the best gamekeeper. Churchill's dash and daring had become a national tradition: what, it was argued, might not be the splendid results of harnessing this gift, spurred on by election pledges freely given in the Abbey Division and at Epping, to the service of tax reduction?

Of the five Churchill Budgets I will say nothing, though I could say much. On the whole, Churchill was probably glad to be rid of the burden of the Exchequer. He had been less at his ease there than in any of his other Cabinet posts, and he went into the General Election knowing full well that there was no chance of his returning to the same office if his Party won. The next Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer would have to be a full-blown Protectionist, not a half-hearted "safeguarder".

His Party did not win. For the moment it was saved the trouble of having to find an answer to the awkward question: What shall we do with Winston? Winston, too, was saved the trouble of having to help it to an answer. Instead, when the elections were over—and Labour in office, though not in power, for a second time—he took a happy holiday in Canada, painting the Rocky Mountains.

The story of the *British Gazette* is entertaining. Just as the Sidney Street "siege" was the most revealing episode of Churchill's Home Secretaryship, so his editorship of the *British Gazette* was the most revealing episode of his Chancellorship, fifteen years later. Both had a spirit in common with such episodes of his early manhood as the adventure of the defence of the armoured train outside Ladysmith and the adventure of the gurgling vulture on the veldt. He was still the zestful boy.

In May, 1926 (soon after Churchill had introduced his second Budget), the Baldwin Government was faced with the "disaster" from which the Chancellor had sought to save the country the year before by agreeing to subsidise the coal industry. Having already paid out some twenty-five million sterling, the Government had withdrawn the subsidy, and the coalowners had given notice of a reduction in wages. Thereupon the Council of the Trade Union Congress announced that unless the Government found some means of preventing the reduction—either by continuing the subsidy or taking over the mines—it would call a General Strike and paralyse the country.

The strike was called on May 3rd. Until the last moment a settlement seemed likely, but trouble suddenly broke out in a newspaper office: the printers objected to a certain leading article and prevented publication. Churchill was afterwards accused of having played a leading part in the breakdown, but this he sturdily denied.

The fat was now in the fire, and nothing could stop the spread of the conflagration. The newspaper industry was in the first batch of industries to be closed down. Gradual

paralysis of all the activities of the nation, except those essential to life, was the aim of the General Staff of the strike, and groups of trades were scheduled for disappearance in rotation.

The community carried on gallantly in the face of great difficulties. But there were certain services that it was quite impossible to provide on the spur of the moment, owing to the lack of skilled labour. Among these services was news. Although, after the strike had continued for the better part of a week, a large number of makeshift news-sheets began to appear, they were at best a miserable substitute, and the difficulties of distribution were almost insuperable.

It was in these circumstances that the Government conceived the bright idea of appointing the one member of the Cabinet who was a professional journalist to be editor of an official newspaper. The proprietors of the ultra-Conservative *Morning Post* had lost no time in offering the Government their plant and offices for the production, it was suggested, of a four-page news bulletin with a maximum circulation of about 400,000. All the compositors, and most of the machine-men, on the *Post* were "out", but all the journalists were "in", and plenty of amateur labour was available. A foreman from another Conservative newspaper volunteered to work a linotype.

Now the *Morning Post* was the newspaper for which Churchill had done distinguished work during the Sudan and South African campaigns more than twenty years before. It had made him a famous journalist. He felt for it the newspaper man's natural affection for the paper that first recognises his talent. True, the *Morning Post* had in his Radical days said more violent things about him than anyone else, and had vindictively pursued him through his darkest fortunes at the Admiralty; but that was all in the Party game. Besides, what a triumph to be the Editor, after all these years, of a Great Daily Paper! He had never succeeded in being a real Editor since he

was a very small boy, and then the paper only came out once. He went down to the offices of the *Morning Post* sternly resolved to do his duty.

Next day the *Morning Post* came out under the new name of the *British Gazette*, and contained the following announcement: "Late last night important visitors to the Editor were announced, and into the Editorial Room marched the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Samuel Hoare (later Secretary of State for India) and Mr. J. C. G. Davidson (Chief Government Whip), and a train of departmental officials. They had come to act on a suggestion of the Editor to commandeering, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the *Morning Post* and to convert it off-hand into the Government news-sheet, the *British Gazette*." The staff, it was recorded, gave them a "frolic welcome".

When, eight days later, the *British Gazette* ceased publication, and the *Morning Post* appeared again it was described by the latter as "an amazing feat of journalistic enterprise and organisation". Starting with a circulation of 232,000 on May 5th, it had reached 836,000 on May 8th, 1,801,000 on May 11th, and 2,250,000 on May 13th. Mr. Churchill was therefore able to lay claim, if he chose, to having edited the newspaper with the largest daily circulation. The only limit to its circulation was imposed by the capacity of the presses and the difficulties of transport. Competition was negligible, being practically confined, until the strike was nearly over, to a rival sheet published by the Trade Union Congress, and a diminutive issue of *The Times*.

Churchill's achievements as an editor were not allowed to pass entirely without criticism. The *British Gazette* was charged with vulgarity in its efforts to be bright, and with partisanship in its efforts to be of assistance to the Government.

"But," said the Editor, "I can't expect to be impartial as between the fire brigade and the fire."

When Parliament debated the matter the Opposition became very rude. They pointed out that the sensational

story of a Russian plot being behind the strike, quoted from a French newspaper, had been published, while a Peace Manifesto issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury had been held back. The very "descriptive" reporting of Parliamentary debates during the period of the strike—with such references to M.P.s as, "Mr. George Lansbury, a wild Socialist, passionate and shouting"—were also resented.

"A first-class indiscretion, clothed in the tawdry garb of third-rate journalism," was one of Lloyd George's thrusts. To which the Editor-Chancellor retorted that "the duty of the *British Gazette* was not to publish a lot of defeatist trash."

Criticism served, however, to give Churchill an opportunity for one of his brightest rejoinders.

Sir Henry Slessor, who had been in the first Labour Government, had spoken of the *Gazette* as "this rag", to which Churchill replied that he hoped it had at least sickened the right honourable gentleman of State Socialism in newspapers: "If ever you let loose on us another General Strike we will let loose on you another *British Gazette*."

VII

ARTIST, AUTHOR, BRICKLAYER

LORD BEAVERBROOK HAS published in the second volume of his *Politicians and the War* a letter to him from Churchill, dated March 28th, 1916, when he was serving with the Royal Scots Fusiliers at the Front, which reveals the man in a few sentences.

"I have," he wrote, "really throughout this war tried only to do the right thing at whatever cost. But the problem which now faces me is very difficult. My work out here with all its risk and all its honour, which I greatly value: on the other hand the increasingly grave situation

of the country and the feeling of knowledge and of power to help in mending matters which is strong within me. Add to this dilemma the awkwardness of changing, and the cause of my, I hope, unusual hesitations is obvious.

"In principle I have no doubts, but as to time and occasion I find very much greater difficulties. . . . Meanwhile the days pass easily and swiftly here: and at any time the necessity of solving these problems may flash away."¹

Note the meaning of this. He feels that he has been misunderstood and unjustly treated; he is acutely conscious that his gifts are being wasted as a mere regimental officer; nevertheless he enjoys his fighting job, and finds the thought of his constant danger dramatically consoling. Yet it seems to him that his teeming brain—which, we have been assured by an independent witness, was "in strategic proposals hardly less prolific than the entire General Staff"—ought not to be at the mercy of a casual bullet.

This, then, is the man who, at the age of forty-two, when he has discovered to his bitter chagrin that he is not even wanted in the fighting line, settles down towards the end of the year to learn painting.

For the first time since he was a boy at school he is suffering from a sense of failure. His enemies allege that he is "a totally discredited person". Why is he so hated? Why should his blunt advice be so resented?

The year before, when he was Chancellor of the Duchy, he had sent to members of the Cabinet an old memorandum of his, on the subject of Servia, with the note attached: "My object in now circulating this paper is not to make reproaches, not to boast superior foresight, but to implore my colleagues to rouse themselves to effective and energetic action before it is too late". Who could take exception to such a plain statement of fact? The memorandum *did* point a moral, and it *was* in the interest of the country

¹ Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War: 1914-19*, Lane Publications, 1925.

that its warning should be noted. Could it be possible that this sort of truth-telling made duller statesmen shun him as a colleague, however much they might like him as a man? It was all very puzzling. He brooded.

These were Churchill's darkest days. The Dardanelles Commission was still dragging on, a perpetual source of irritation. He had neither public office nor private influence. Yet the sense of "knowledge and power" remained strong within him—frustrated, repressed, corroding. With the world going to pieces, and his country tottering on the verge of ruin, his misery became so acute as to threaten his health. Oh for some outlet, some work to do!

He had often amused himself by sketching, but had never handled a brush. Then it chanced that he met a painter at work—Sir John Lavery, who had been commissioned by the naval officers of the Armoured Car Division (his own creation), which had done such good work in Belgium, to paint Churchill's portrait. As he watched he grew intensely interested. The building up of a picture seemed very much like the building up of a book, a job he did know something about.

"How do you do it?" he asked the artist. "Quite simple. Why not try yourself?" Sir John replied. Churchill tried—putting on a smock, so that he should feel he was playing the part—and found it indeed quite simple, for him.

When he was painting he discovered that he could think of nothing else, least of all talk about anything else. No more brooding when he was alone; no more interminable discussions and justifications when he was in company. The relief was incredible. Here was a job of work demanding the intense concentration of an entirely different group of brain-cells from those he had been accustomed to over-exercise.

Lavery accepted him as a pupil, and he made phenomenal progress in a strongly individual style of landscape work, vigorous and colourful. Augustus John found that he had "extraordinary talent"; Orpen, that he was "most

promising". P. J. Konody, the art critic, was much impressed, and René Jean, picking out the work of "Charles Morin" for special praise in a Paris exhibition, wrote "this young man has fugue" (which was presumably high praise).

People were sufficiently interested at any rate to ask, "Who is Charles Morin?" and four out of five pictures at this Paris show (in 1921) were sold for £30 each. They were seascapes painted near Marseilles, impressions of the brilliant glitter of sunshine falling upon water from a stormy sky—a vivid symbolisation, perhaps, of the artist's mood.

Churchill found great consolation in this hobby. He persevered in the mastery of technical problems, and wherever he was to travel in future his palette and canvases were to go with him. Thus, when he was Colonial Secretary he painted the Pyramids (and fell off his camel while doing it), and a series of studies in Palestine, two of which he presented to the City of Dundee for sale to help the unemployed. There are also a number of paintings by his hand, done on holiday, of Greek scenes and of the Rocky Mountains.

Churchill's enemies naturally found in these artistic exploits fresh ground for their sneers at "the gifted amateur", the man who was able to do everything well but nothing really well. "Charles Morin," they said, "had much better stick to painting, where he can't do any serious harm." But "Charles Morin" may well be reckoned to have had the laugh of his foes in this matter at least. He had found within himself a ground of solace to which the shafts of their wit and the arrows of their malice could not penetrate, a place of quiet and beauty and refreshment of the spirit; and while life lasted he would be able to take refuge there.

His reading and his writing had long, of course, been another resource in hours when the battle slackened and the pulse of life beat a little more slowly. At the age of twenty-three he had thus written of *Savrola's* library; and *Savrola* was merely a romantic self-portrait:

"The walls were covered with shelves filled with well-used volumes. To that Pantheon of literature none were admitted till they had been read and valued. It was a various library: the philosophy of Schopenhauer divided Kant from Hegel; *Rasselas* and *La Curée* lay side by side; eight substantial volumes of Gibbon's famous history were not perhaps inappropriately prolonged by a fine edition of the *Decameron*; the *Origin of Species* rested by the side of a black-letter Bible; *The Republic* maintained an equilibrium with *Vanity Fair* and the *History of European Morals*. A volume of Macaulay's essays lay on the reading table itself."¹

In that fanciful and pompous picture one gets a glimpse of the ideal Churchill set before himself in his youth when, in an Indian barrack (of all strange places), his mind quite suddenly opened to the glories, the joys and the sorrows of reading. Macaulay has remained through life one of the chief sources of his literary style, as well as of his Whiggish political ideas. "Magnificently readable; nearly as readable as Macaulay, and he can hold an enormous work together," was Arnold Bennett's patronising praise, after observing that "he *will* write for effect, when he has neither the leisure nor the natural abilities to do that".

Gibbon has also been a formative influence. But whatever had been his literary nourishment he could hardly have failed to be the natural literary hero of Mr. J. L. Garvin, who has called him "one of the born organists of language. He is all colour and personality. There is a style because there is a man".

His best passages are, in fact, largely speeches, requiring for the extraction of the last ounce of their effectiveness the added glory of the organ-music of the human voice. There is hardly a jot of difference between Winston Churchill conversing, Winston Churchill declaiming, and Winston

¹ W. S. Churchill, *Savrola: A Tale of the Revolution in Laurania*, Londmans, 1900.

Churchill writing. "There is a style because there is a man." And although the man has grown older the style has never changed. As he wrote of his father: "His mind indeed gained knowledge and experience from instruction, but his essential character, changing hardly at all by contact with the world, unfolded with remorseless and unalterable persistency."

Here is the close of a speech delivered at Dundee in 1908:

"Cologne cathedral took 600 years to build. Generations of architects and builders lived and died while the work was in progress. Still the work went on. Sometimes a generation built wrongly, and the next generation had to unbuild, and the next generation had to build again. Still the work went on through all the centuries, till at last there stood forth to the world a mighty monument of beauty and of truth to command the admiration and inspire the reverence of mankind.

"So let it be with the British Commonwealth. Let us build wisely, let us build surely, let us build faithfully, let us build not for the moment but for future years, seeking to establish here below what we hope to find above—a house of many mansions where there shall be room for all."

And here is a passage from *The World Crisis* written twenty years later:

"There is no place for compromise in war. In war the clouds never blow over, they gather unceasingly and fall in thunderbolts. Things do not get better by being left alone. Unless they are adjusted they explode with a shattering detonation. Clear leadership, violent action, rigid decisions one way or the other, form the only path, not only of victory, but of safety and even of mercy.

"The State cannot afford division or hesitation at the executive centre. To humour a distinguished man, to avoid a fierce dispute, nay, even to preserve the governing

instrument itself, cannot, except as the alternative to sheer anarchy, be held to justify half-measures. The peace of the council may for one moment be won, but the price is paid on the battlefield by brave men marching forward against unspeakable terrors in the belief that conviction and coherence have animated their orders."

Or again, here is a passage from the immature *Savrola*, equally interesting in style as in matter:

"The people's good! That, he would not disguise from himself, was rather the direction than the cause of his efforts. Ambition was the motive force and he was powerless. He could appreciate the delights of an artist, a life devoted to the search for beauty. To live in dreaming quiet in some beautiful garden, far from the noise of men, and with every diversion that art and intellect could suggest, was, he felt, the more agreeable picture. And yet he knew that he could not endure it. 'Vehement, high and daring' was his cast of mind. The life he lived was the only one he could ever live; he must go on to the end. The end comes often early to such men, whose spirits are so wrought that they know rest only in action, contentment only in danger, and in confusion find their only peace."¹

Whether speaking or writing, as a phrasemaker he is unmatched. He has always had the art of saying in a few words the thing that is so apt, or at the moment matters so much, that the words pass into common use, like the "quotations" in Shakespeare; as, for example, "a certain liveliness", "the fog of war", "a terminological inexactitude", "a legitimate war gamble".

One of his early books, *London to Ladysmith*, has this unforgettable sentence: "O horrible War, amazing medley of the glorious and the squalid, the pitiful and the sublime,

¹ W. S. Churchill, *Savrola: A Tale of the Revolution in Laurania*, Longmans, 1900.

if modern men of light and leading saw your face closer, simple folk would see it hardly ever."¹

Here is his comment on the Battle of the Somme: "Unconquerable except by death, which they had conquered, they have set up a monument of native virtue which will command the wondering reverence and gratitude of our island people so long as we endure as a nation among men"; and again, "Son of the Stone Age, vanquisher of Nature, with all her trials and monsters, he met the awful and self-inflicted agony with new reserves of fortitude . . . Freed in the main by his intelligence from medieval fears, he marched to death with sombre dignity".²

It was inevitable that a man so doubly endowed with the gift of utterance, whether written or spoken, should from his youth up have been fascinated by the power of the Press and the problem it presents.

"One of the greatest things in this country," he said in 1931, "is beyond all doubt newspaper work. I like to go into a newspaper office, and especially a great newspaper office, with its machines crashing and grinding away, for it reminds me of the combination of a first-class battleship and a first-class general election."

Speaking at the Press Club soon after the close of the War, he said: "At the beginning of the War the Press simply did not exist. 'Brass hats' said: 'How dare you speak about the war! This is *our* war.' They said: 'Use a word of indiscretion and you will be shot.' Then gradually the Press began to come back into its own, and from that moment it marched from victory to victory. It dominated the counsels of the Government; it made and unmade Ministries; it blasted or boosted: until at a certain period there was no doubt it exerted a power in this country beyond what was its proper function in the State. Given enough of the Sword, the Pen was bound to establish its ascendancy."

¹ W. S. Churchill, *London to Ladysmith, via Pretoria*, Longmans, 1900.

² W. S. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, Thornton Butterworth.

Churchill's lecture tours in the United States have been nothing more than a particularly delightful and profitable form of journalism. As long ago as 1900 when, although the most famous young man in the world, he was yet hardly a figure of world significance, he netted what is probably the record sum of £10,000 by one of these high-pressure feats of daily declamation. The brilliant journalism of *The World Crisis* had brought him in £15,000 before it was half finished. Even that more orthodox literary enterprise, the biography of his father, was not only praised by a master of the art, Lord Rosebery, as "one of the first dozen, perhaps the first half-dozen, biographies in the language", but was a "best seller" to the tune of £8,000 profit for the author.

Churchill has never pretended to conceal his delight in this aspect of his literary labours. He has gloried in it. It has always been his special pride that for many years he earned his living by his pen, having inherited no private means—a pride that was accentuated by the knowledge that he left school with the reputation of a dunce. Yet at the same time writing has been far more to him than a source of income: it has been a perpetual joy and consolation, a vent for the ceaseless activity of his brain, a sheer necessity for the continued health of his whole personality. The perpetual stream of memoranda that amazed, amused, impressed and irritated the Asquith and Lloyd George Cabinets during the War was a manifestation of the same vital urge. Interested in his thoughts to the point of astonishment, he had to express himself or perish.

Churchill's delight in an earning power which made him monetarily independent of Cabinet office must have somewhat modified his pleasure when, in the year 1921, he inherited under the will of his cousin, Lord Herbert Vane-Tempest, an income of £5,000 a year; but the bequest did not lessen his output. A castle in Co. Antrim went with the income, but twelve months after it passed into his possession it was burnt down during the Irish troubles, and one can

hardly imagine him in any case retiring to the seclusion of the Antrim glens.

At Chartwell, an old manor house on the slopes of Westerham, in the county of Kent, he found a home in exquisite surroundings, just far enough from London to be out of the way of casual callers, yet near enough to keep him in close touch with the pulse of life at Westminster. It was from the peace of Chartwell that he stepped, as it were, into the maelstrom of the traffic of New York, as related in the first chapter of this book. It was in the peace of Chartwell that for years he worked upon a monumental life of his great ancestor, the first Duke of Marlborough.

He works there in a lofty, oak-beamed study, long enough for him to pace up and down for hours at a time, dictating. At one end of the study there is a bed; on the walls a fine contemporary print of the Duke of Marlborough, a cartoon of Lord Randolph Churchill, engravings of horses, including one with which Lord Randolph won the Oaks. The huge writing-table was his father's; so also was the big brass inkstand.

A characteristic of Winston Churchill is his delight in craftsmanship—in the correct way of doing things. In literary labour he finds pleasure in the mere structure of a book, the logical sequence of its chapters, the appropriateness of its paragraphing, the justly ordered arrangement of its sentences. So, too, in the activities of a Government department he has always paid the closest attention to the administrative mechanism by means of which the greatest amount of effectively controlled work can be done in the least possible time. The mechanism of the battlefield, as we know, is his peculiar passion.

There is something of the super-boy in all this. It was the super-boy in him that became a bricklayer at Chartwell. There was a cottage to be built on the estate, and a long wall. He worked on the job, with a professional bricklayer, for five or six hours a day, learnt to lay well and truly a brick a minute, and in the autumn of 1928

created a sensation in the Trade Union world by joining the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, on the invitation of the General Secretary, Mr. George Hicks, as an "adult apprentice", paying an entrance fee of five shillings (by cheque).

For this, poor Mr. Hicks got into terrible hot water. He had probably not reckoned upon Churchill's mysterious power of attracting attention—"his unique power", as a fiend has said, "of attracting the limelight, much as a lightning conductor attracts lightning". That he should be officially recognised as a bricklayer was denounced in public resolutions as "a piece of humiliating and degrading buffoonery"; "a good joke for Winston Churchill, but a painful insult to the members of the Union", creating "a nauseating situation". Nevertheless, the "adult apprentice" stuck to his ticket. But the cheque for five shillings was never paid into the Union's general fund.

Among the other evidences at Chartwell of his ambition to be a working man are a goldfish-pond and a bathing-pool. His restless hands are seldom idle even in the House of Commons. Toy swords a yard long, and cleverly constructed triangles, made from the order papers for the day, stream from them.

Churchill also prides himself upon his cooking. As a soldier who has roamed the wide open spaces of the Empire he can cook a cutlet or a sausage to a turn; but on the whole he prefers the electric grill at Chartwell to the camp fire.

He is not a keen racing man, but has always had a passion for riding. The one game in which he has distinguished himself is polo. He prefers big-game hunting to fox hunting, and shot some nice trophies—including a white rhinoceros—when touring Africa, as Under-Secretary for the Colonies, in 1907, carrying a small collection of books on Socialism and Napoleon. He has also hunted wild boar in the Normandy forest of Eu at the invitation of his friend, the Duke of Westminster.

The joke about "Winston's hats" is a trifle outworn, but has done him valuable publicity service with the cartoonists. His head is unquestionably an out-size, and his taste in wearing apparel (inherited from his father) inclined to be independent. For example, when a colonel of Scots Fusiliers at the Front he rather shocked "brass hats" by appearing in an exceptionally long trench-waterproof, surmounted by a riding-stock, and a blue French trench-helmet, instead of the regulation Glengarry "bonnet". He has been known to wear a black waistcoat with a tail coat at dinner, and he went down to Windsor to dine with King Edward in 1907, when he had just been made a Privy Councillor, in a morning-coat instead of a frock-coat. Of his style in collars the "Haberdashery Editor" of a Worcester, U.S.A., newspaper wrote recently: "It was a wing collar, but such a wing! Starting to turn back at the front collar button, these wings kept on winning their way back until they finally reached the top of the collar at a point well back of the wearer's ears."

In private life Mr. Churchill is one of the most friendly and simple-hearted of men, with a strong sense of humour that he does not shrink from applying to his own case. His arrogance is a public pose—almost, one suspects, a public defence—rather than a personal characteristic of his private soul. His instinct for attack finds vent at home in a genial exuberance. Hence the multitude of his private friends and of his public enemies.

The influence of Churchill's American affiliations can be clearly discerned. He has always made it his special business to keep in touch with informed opinion on the other side of the Atlantic, whether in or out of office. It is probably true of him to say that his Conservatism is more akin to the American than to the British type, while his Imperialism has always studiously avoided the impression of involving the creation of two rival empires. His popularity in the States is immense—even to Englishmen amazing; but his qualities of courage and will-power

are precisely those which might be expected to appeal to a young and infinitely self-confident people.

VIII

PROPHET AND PREMIER

I. WAITING

FOR THE BEST part of ten years, before Winston Churchill was called to his second term at the Admiralty, he devoted himself to the role of prophet. In this role his wonderful gift of language, both written and spoken, proved invaluable. Here are a few of the things he said or wrote:

May, 1932.—

‘Our ceaseless endeavour must be to promote international action on the currency question. No country can tackle this question alone. I regard international action to arrest the fall of prices as the sole hope of averting a world crash compared with which everything we have suffered up to the present will be a mere nothing. Only world action can cure a world evil.

‘I counsel and urge that we lay aside every impediment, and postpone every obstructive obstacle, and that we concentrate on the one vital, prior, paramount objective, namely international action to arrest the fall in prices, to restore and reopen the possibilities of world trade, and to unite again civilisation and prosperity.’

November, 1932.—

‘Fears in Europe are greater, rivalries are sharper, military plans are more closely concerted, military organisations are more carefully and efficiently developed, and Britain is weaker. Britain’s period of weakness is Europe’s danger. . . .

'I cannot recall any time when the gap between the kind of words that statesmen use and what is actually happening in many countries was so great as it is now. I urge the Government to tell the British people exactly what is going on. Let them know the truth!'

September, 1936 (in the *Evening Standard*).—

'Hardly a week passes without some dark, sinister event marking the downward movement of Europe, or revealing the intense pressure at work beneath the surface. The Spanish horror broadens and deepens as the days pass. A sense of indefinable anxiousness, alike about external and internal affairs, broods over France. Hitler decrees the doubling in numbers and quality of the German Army. Mussolini boasts that he has armed eight million Italians. Everywhere the manufacture of munitions proceeds apace and Science burrows its insulted head in the filth of slaughterous inventions. Only unarmed, unthinking Britain has the illusion of security.'

November, 1936.—

'Everyone can see what the position is. The Government cannot make up its mind or cannot get the Prime Minister to make up his mind, and so they are decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, all-powerful for impotence.'

October, 1937.—

'We are passing through a time of grave anxiety, and I fear of anxiety not soon to be relieved. . . . It was once well said, "Britain's hour of weakness is Europe's hour of peril". May we now not say, "Britain's hour of gathering strength is the world's hour of reassurance"? . . . Never was there more glorious and sympathetic understanding of our peril and our difficulties than exist in the U.S.A. to-day. The speech of President Roosevelt only a few hours ago expresses in eloquent language exactly the same ideas that are in our minds.'

September, 1938.—

‘It is necessary that the nation should realise the magnitude of the disaster into which we are being led. . . . The menace is not to the Czechs but to the cause of freedom and democracy in every country. If peace is to be preserved on a lasting basis it can only be by combination of all the Powers whose convictions, and whose vital interests, are opposed to Nazi domination. A month ago it would have been possible. But all was cast away. Parliament should be called together without further delay and duly informed upon these grievous matters which affect the whole life and future of our country.’

As First Lord of the Admiralty, at the beginning of World War Two, he said:

October, 1939.—

‘Directions have been given by the Government to prepare for a war of at least three years. That does not mean that victory may not be gained in a shorter time. How soon it will be gained depends upon how long Herr Hitler and his group of wicked men, whose hands are stained with blood and soiled with corruption, can keep their grip upon the docile, unhappy German people.

‘It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin, but it is not for him or his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough. . . .

‘How often have we been told we are the effete democracies whose day is done, and who must now be replaced by various forms of virile dictatorship and totalitarian despotism! No doubt at the beginning we shall have to suffer because of having too long wished to lead a peaceful life. Our reluctance to fight was mocked at as cowardice. Our desire to see an unarmed world was proclaimed as the proof of our decay.

‘Now we have begun: now we are going on; now, with the help of God, and with the conviction that we are the

defenders of civilisation and freedom, we are going on, and we are going to go on to the end. . . .

'We have the oceans, and the assurance that we can bring the vast latent power of the British and French Empires to bear upon the decisive points. We have the freely given, ardent support of the twenty millions of British citizens in the self-governing Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. We have the heart and moral convictions of India on our side. We believe we are entitled to the respect and good will of the world, and particularly of the United States.

'Here I am in the same post as I was twenty-five years ago. Rough times lie ahead; but how different is the scene from that of October 1914!

'Much has happened since then; misunderstandings and disputes have arisen, but all the more do we appreciate in England the reasons why this great and friendly nation of Italy, with whom we have never been at war, has not seen fit to enter the struggle.

'I do not underrate what lies before us: but I must say this: I cannot doubt we have the strength to carry a good cause forward, and to break down the barriers which stand between the wage-earning masses of every land and a free and more abundant daily life.'

February, 1940.—

'Come, then, let us to the task, to the battle and the toil. Each to our part, each to our station. Fill the armies, rule the air, pour out the munitions, strangle the U-boats, sweep the mines, plough the land, build the ships, guard the streets, succour the wounded, uplift the downcast, and honour the brave.'

'Let us go forward together in all parts of the Empire, in all parts of this island. There is not a week, nor a day, nor an hour to be lost.'

II. DESTINY

In his first speech to the House of Commons as Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill said:

May, 1940.—

‘I have nothing to offer but blood and toil, tears and sweat. . . .

‘You ask us what is our aim. I can give the answer in one word—it is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all peril, victory however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival—and let that be realised, no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages; but mankind shall move forward towards its goal, and I take up my task with buoyancy and hope.

‘I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. I feel entitled, at this juncture, to claim the aid of all, and I say: “Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength.”’

Subsequently, he said:

May, 1940 (to the Trade Unions).—

‘The country’s needs are imperative, inescapable and imperious. . . . We can meet them now as a Government founded upon a new community of national purpose and with the creative energies of a people awakened to the magnitude of the task. We have the fullest confidence in the readiness of the organised workers to accept the obligations arising out of the demands which the State is compelled to make upon their endurance and their capacity for sacrifice. . . . We are all called upon to make a supreme effort to defend the country, to preserve our liberties and to win the War.’

May, 1940 (in a broadcast to the Nation).—

‘Our task is not only to win the battle, but to win the War.

‘After this battle in France abates its force there will come a battle for our island, for all that Britain is and all that Britain means. That will be the struggle. In that supreme emergency we shall not hesitate to take every step, even the most drastic, to call forth from our people

the last ounce and the last inch of effort of which they are capable. The interest of property and the hours of labour are nothing compared to the struggle for life and honour, for life and freedom, to which we vowed ourselves . . .'

June, 1940 (in the House of Commons).—

'There has never been a period in all these long centuries in which an absolute guarantee against invasion, still less against serious raids, could have been given to our people. In the days of Napoleon the same wind that would have carried his transports across the Channel might have driven away the blockading fleet.

'There was always a chance, and it is that chance which has excited and befooled the imaginations of many Continental tyrants. We are assured that novel methods will be adopted, and when we see the originality of malice and the ingenuity of aggression which our enemy displays we may certainly prepare ourselves for every kind of novel strategy and every kind of brutal and treacherous manœuvre.

'I think no idea is so outlandish that it should not be considered and viewed with a searching, but I hope also with a steady, eye. One must never forget the solid assurance of sea power and those which belong to air power if it can be locally exercised.

'I have myself full confidence that if all do their duty and nothing is neglected and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our island home, ride out the storms of war, and outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone.'

June, 1940.—

'If this is one of the most awe-striking periods in the long history of France and Britain, it is also, beyond doubt, the most sublime. Side by side—unaided, except by their kith and kin in the Great Dominions, and by the wide Empires which rest beneath their shield—side by side

the British and French people have advanced to rescue not only Europe but mankind from the foulest and most soul-destroying tyranny that has ever darkened and stained the pages of history.

'Behind them, behind us, behind the armies and fleets of Britain and France, gather a group of shattered States and bludgeoned races—the Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians—upon all of whom the long night of barbarism will descend, unbroken even by a star of hope, unless we conquer, as conquer we must, as conquer we shall.

'To-day is Trinity Sunday. Centuries ago words were written to be a call and a spur to the faithful servants of truth and justice: "Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valour, and be in readiness for the conflict, for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altars. As the will of God is in Heaven, even so let Him do."'

June, 1940.—

'At any rate, that is what we are trying to do. That is the resolve of the Government, every man of them. It is the will of Parliament and of the nation.

'The British Empire with the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength, even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule.

'We cannot flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air.

'We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, in the fields, in the streets and in the hills,

'We shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, will carry on the struggle until in God's good time the New World, with all its power and might, sets forth to the liberation and rescue of the old.'

June, 1940 (in a Broadcast).—

'The news from France is very bad, and I grieve for the gallant French people who have fallen into this terrible misfortune.

'Nothing will alter our feelings towards them or our faith that the genius of France will rise again. What has happened in France makes no difference to British faith and purpose. We have become the sole champions now in arms to defend the world cause. We shall do our best to be worthy of that high honour.

'We shall defend our island and with the British Empire around us we shall fight on unconquerable until the curse of Hitler is lifted from the brows of men. We are sure that in the end all will be well.'

June, 1940 (in the House of Commons).—

'Let us brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that, if the British Commonwealth and Empire last for a thousand years, men will say: This was their finest hour.'

July, 1940 (after the naval battle of Oran).—

'In the fullest harmony with our Dominions we are moving through a period of extreme danger and of splendid hope, when every virtue of our race will be tested and all that we have and are will be freely staked.

'This is not a time for doubts or weaknesses. This is the supreme hour to which we are called.'

July, 1940 (in a Broadcast).—

'I stand at the head of a Government representing all parties in the State, all creeds, all classes, every recognisable section of opinion.

'We are ranged beneath the crown of our ancient Monarchy. We are supported by a free Parliament and a free Press, but there is one point which unites us all and it sustains us in the public regard, namely, as is increasingly becoming known, we are prepared to proceed to all extremities, to endure them and enforce them. That is our point of union in his Majesty's Government to-night.

'Only in times like these, can nations preserve their freedom and thus only can they uphold the cause entrusted to their care.

'But all depends now upon the whole life and strength of the British race in every part of the world and all of our associated peoples and all our wellwishers in every land doing their utmost night and day, giving all, daring all, enduring all to the utmost, to the end.

'This is no war of chieftains, of princes, or dynasties, or national ambitions: it is a war of people and of causes. There are vast numbers, not only in this land but in every land, who will render faithful service in this war, but whose names will never be known, whose deeds will never be recorded.

'This is a war of the unknown warrior, but let all strive without failing in faith or in duty, and the dark curse of Hitler will be lifted from our age.'

August, 1940.—

'The road to victory may not be so long as we expect. But we have no right to count upon this. Be it long or short, rough or smooth, we mean to reach our journey's end. . . .

'Our people are united and resolved as they have never been before. Death and ruin have become small things compared with the shame of defeat or failure in duty. We cannot tell what lies ahead. It may be that even greater ordeals lie before us. We will face whatever is coming to us. We are sure of ourselves and of our cause. . . .

'For my own part, looking out upon the future, I do not view the process with any misgivings. No one can stop

it. Like the Mississippi, it just keeps rolling along. Let it roll. Let it roll on full flood, inexorable, irresistible, to broader lands and better days.'

September, 1940.—

'If there is to be, as is suggested in a recent oration, a contest of nerves and willpower and endurance, in which the whole British and German people are to engage, be it sharp or be it long, we shall not shrink from it. We believe that the spirit and temperament bred under institutions of freedom will prove more enduring and resilient than anything that can be got out of the most efficiently imposed mechanical discipline. . . .

'I shall not be giving away any military secret if I say we are very much better off than we were a few months ago, and if the problem of invading Great Britain was a *difficult one in June it has become a far more difficult and far larger problem in September.* . . .

'Both at home and abroad, we shall persevere along our course, however the winds may blow.

September, 1940 (in a world Broadcast).—

'It is with devout but sure confidence that I say: "Let God defend the right."

'These cruel, wanton, indiscriminate bombings of London are, of course, a part of Hitler's invasion plan. He hopes, by killing large numbers of civilians and women and children, that he will terrorise and cow the people of this mighty Imperial city and make them a burden and anxiety to the Government, and thus distract our attention unduly from the ferocious onslaught he is preparing.

'Little does he know the spirit of the British nation, or the tough fibre of the Londoners, whose forbears played a leading part in the establishment of Parliamentary institutions, and who have been bred to value freedom far above their lives.

'This wicked man, the repository and embodiment of many forms of soul-destroying hatred, this monstrous

product of former wrongs and shames, has now resolved to try to break our famous island spirit by a process of indiscriminate slaughter and destruction.

'What he has done is to kindle a fire in British hearts here and all over the world which will glow long after all traces of the conflagrations he has caused in London have been removed.

'He has lighted a fire which will burn with a steady and consuming flame until the last vestiges of Nazi tyranny have been burnt out of Europe and until the old world and the new can join hands to rebuild the temples of man's freedom and man's honour upon foundations which will not soon or easily be overthrown.

'This is the time for everyone to stand together and hold firm, as they are doing. I express my admiration for the exemplary manner in which all the A.R.P. services of London are being discharged. Especially the fire brigades, whose work has been so heavy and also dangerous.

'All the world that is still free marvels at the composure and fortitude with which the citizens of London are facing and surmounting the great ordeal to which they are subjected, the end of which or the severity of which cannot yet be foreseen.

'It is a message of good cheer to our fighting forces, on the seas, in the air, and in our waiting armics, in all their posts and stations, that we send them from the capital city. They know that they have behind them a people who will not flinch or weary of the struggle, hard and protracted though it will be, but that we shall rather draw from the heart of suffering itself the means of inspiration and survival, and of a victory won, not only for ourselves but for all—a victory won not only for our own time but for the long and better days that are to come.'

AMEN: SO BE IT.

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Calcutta

1944

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